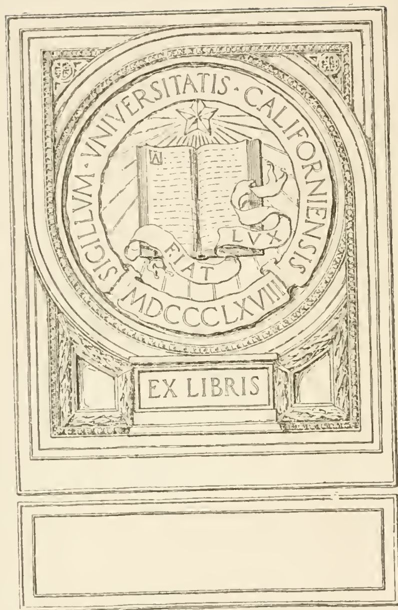
THE TRAGEDY OF A THRONE

HILDEGARDE EBENTH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THE TRAGEDY OF A THRONE

The Tragedy of a Throne

By

Hildegarde Ebenthal

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THE TRAGEDY OF A THRONE

CHAPTER I

A DRAMA OF MIGHT HAVE BEEN

ACCORDING to all human probability we are now nearing the termination of the terrible drama which has brought such overwhelming sorrow to the world. When the end comes we shall find ourselves in a state of chaos from which it will become the duty of the Allies to educe a new political and social Europe.

As that day approaches it is opportune to remember that though the Hohenzollern and the Junker and the Prussian warmongers merit severely condign chastisement, certain of the Germanic States have to be dealt with more in sorrow than in anger. The attachment of the Southern German States to the Confederation is, in reality, but a myth so far as the inner feeling of the masses of the people is concerned. Bavaria, and Baden, and Würtemberg as well, would gladly recover, if they could, the independence which they lost in 1867 and re-sacrificed in 1871.

It is essential to keep in mind that the Confederation of Germany has never been a sincere union. The Empire of which the Hohenzollern ruler is so proud was

erected, and has remained for fifty years without falling, by the ambition and the iron rule of the few. The Southern States, Bavaria in particular, look upon themselves as the hapless victims of Prussian militarism. How far true this attitude may be justified and the means by which the Prussians rose to supremacy in Germany, make a story it is well for the English-speaking world to read and ponder. The reading will bring a clearer understanding of the historical delusion of a United Germany; it will also demonstrate the overbearing arrogance of the Prussian domination towards the other States in the Empire.

The great settlement which will form the basis of the Europe of the future will naturally be discussed by Britain, among the Allies, and the racial factors alluded to may have some bearing upon the allocation of punishment, and the readjustment of territories.

The history of Bavaria in the nineteenth century is a sad one. By temperament and historical associations, the most fitted to be the leading State in the Germanic Confederation, she yet was compelled—for beneath the surface it was compulsion—to waive her Right at the threats of the Might uttered by her ruthless neighbour, Prussia.

The German of the South is quite a different kind of man from the Prussian. Fate linked them together in circumstances over which the South German had no control, but which he has cursed even when he had to accept them. We need to be reminded in the present

day, of the hesitating attitude which was taken up by the Bavarians and Würtembergers when the war of 1870 with France broke out; reminded, too, of the efforts used by Prince Bismarck to hold the unwilling allies of Prussia to their fate. After the war, the antipathy which existed all over Southern Germany against Prussia, grew in intensity as the importance of Prussia increased. At Munich, for instance, the people made no secret of their hatred of the oppressors of their freedom, for such they deemed the Prussians. There were taverns where no Prussians were admitted, and others where even the most devoted drinkers of beer got up and went away whenever they saw a Prussian appear. This was notorious in Berlin, where it was realised, as far back as the earliest years of the Confederation, that though Bavaria had become part of the German Empire, the hearts of its inhabitants would always protest against the loss of their independence for the advantage and aggrandisement of a foreign and detested dynasty. Unfortunately the Government, and the old Prince Regent Luitpold in particular, did not share that opinion.

Prince Luitpold owed his elevation to the protection of Prince Bismarck and would never have dared to oppose him. When the old Chancellor ceased to be a political figure, Kaiser William II. took very good care to continue Bismarck's policy towards Bavaria, and made the Regent feel, perhaps more keenly than ever, that he relied upon his always being the zealous servant

of Prussia. When at last he closed his eyes, the die had been cast, and those who governed Bavaria could only follow in his footsteps. His son, whose intellectual faculties were never above the average, yielded the more willingly that his assent secured his accession to the Bavarian throne in the place of the nephew who was passing his weary existence at the lonely castle of Fürstenried, with none beside him but attendants, and kept totally in ignorance, right up to his death in October 1916, of everything that went on in the world.

With the accession of Ludwig III., Luitpold's son, Bavaria lost all chance of being able to cast off the chains which bound her to Prussia; but she has never at heart consented to her doom, and would willingly hail any opportunity to escape from her trammels.

Were the war to end the grip which the Hohenzollerns exercise over Germany, it would be blessed by multitudes of the present citizens of the Empire to a degree that is little suspected abroad. Berlin is well aware of this, though it does not arouse the anxiety it would have done in the days when the throne of Bavaria was occupied by a man who, conscious of his high position, felt humiliated to find that, owing to events which he could not guide and to the treachery of people whom he had trusted, he had become a satellite of a dynasty he secretly despised. The real cause of the catastrophe in which, first, the reason and then the life of Ludwig II. of Bavaria perished, was the antipathy which

he nourished and nursed against Prussia and everything that savoured of Prussianism.

Just before his tragic end he was on the point of making an alliance with France, whose people he loved so well, and thereby becoming the architect of the renewed independence of his country. This attempt to escape from the Prussian yoke was the prelude to disaster; he was put out of the way in circumstances the full tragedy of which, in its sinister reality, has never been known outside of his own country, where his death proved only a nine days' wonder.

Ludwig II. was sacrificed to the exigencies of a policy that knew no limits to its ambitions and because he represented a serious danger to a wide political system, the monstrous defects of which he had been the first to perceive and point out. Whatever may have been the eccentricities of his mind, he possessed to an uncommon degree the sense of his own royal dignity and intensely loved the country over which he ruled. It cannot truthfully be said that he became insane in the ordinary meaning of the word. His strongly imaginative mind was intentionally stimulated and excited by those interested in his destruction, and he was goaded by obstacles purposely thrust in his path. Thus, perplexed and heartbroken, he was literally hustled to his tomb.

Undoubtedly Ludwig did many singular things under the stress of the emotions which his entourage of unscrupulous traitors had fomented, and which towards

the end of his life unhinged his mind; but the real story of this unhappy chief of the ill-fated House of Wittelsbach has not yet been told. Books have been written concerning him and the principal events of his reign, but nearly the whole of this literature was created by people anxious to promulgate the fables that had been circulated under Prussian auspices concerning him and his doings. My endeavour here will be to relate the facts as I know them, or as communicated to me by friends intimately associated with the Wittelsbachs.

Incidentally, too, it will be my purpose to point out that had the King been listened to, the hideous monster of Prussian militarism would never have been able to raise its head in the stupendous and dangerous manner it has done, to the misfortune alike of humanity and civilisation. That he fell a victim to a vast conspiracy in which his nearest relations took a part, is unfortunately but too certain. That his eccentricities, which proceeded, more than anything else, from a morbid disdain of persons to whom he knew himself to be infinitely superior, were represented in the light of madness by those who should profit by his "removal," has been proved to the satisfaction of all who have followed his history without bias. That his removal, too, was due to the knowledge (which had reached the Prussian Foreign Office) of his desire to free himself from the fetters it had forged around him, is firmly believed to this day in Bavaria, where his memory is cherished

tenderly as the victim of his uncle and of the power of Prussianism.

Throughout the Bavarian mountains of Tyrol, the memory of the young King, who was looked upon in the light of the Knight of "Lohengrin," always ready to avenge wrongs done to others, is cherished and piously preserved to the present day, whilst that of the Prince Regent Luitpold is execrated. Had Ludwig only been willing to say the word his subjects would have risen at his bidding and rushed to his rescue, but the nobility of his nature refused to lend itself to any enterprise where others might have been compromised and lost their lives.

There is no doubt that the influence of Wagner, to which so many of Ludwig's misfortunes were due, was favourably viewed and encouraged in Berlin, where they realised perfectly the danger which this unhealthy influence was likely to exercise over the soul and heart of a young man, who stepped too early into a great position for which nothing in his education had ever prepared him.

Ludwig's association with Wagner will be related in these pages in its true light for perhaps the first time, as will many other episodes, so that the reader will form a more accurate conception of the life of a Sovereign who, whatever his faults, was, with the exception of the Emperor Frederick III., the last real King Germany has known.

CHAPTER II

THE BENDING OF THE TWIG

IN attempting to pass judgment on Ludwig II.; to arrive at a conclusion concerning his character, and the strange circumstances in which this character developed, one must take into consideration his antecedents, as well as the curious education he received, which only helped to increase the nervousness from which he suffered from his birth. Nor must it be forgotten that mental disease was hereditary in the House of Wittelsbach. In the course of the century before the King's birth no fewer than twenty members of his family had suffered from dementia; his grandfather was more than eccentric, whilst one of his aunts, the sister of King Maximilian, had been confined in a private asylum for a number of years. The family had always intermarried either with each other, or with the Habsburgs, and both the father and mother of Ludwig II. were closely related with the house of Hesse-Darmstadt, in which lunacy was also hereditary.

Clearly a child in whose veins ran blood so contaminated ought to have been reared most tenderly and with strict regard for all possible hygienic conditions. His brain ought not to have been stimulated too early,

and every care ought to have been used to secure for him a well-balanced mind through an appropriate education, in which physical welfare ought to have been looked after just as much as mental development. Instead of this his father, King Maximilian, applied himself to bring up the little boy in what can only be called a Spartan way; whilst his mother, the Queen Marie, was neither clever enough nor energetic enough to supervise the training of her child and to try to counteract the effects of the false system under which he was being formed. She was a good woman but of very limited intelligence, entirely under the influence of her husband and afraid to express an opinion in his presence. The King, who held the most exalted ideas of his own dignity and tried to inculcate them on his heir, never missed an opportunity to remind him that he would also be a Sovereign one day. Haughty by temperament, Ludwig was easily persuaded that he was moulded out of different clay from other people, and that later he would be able to do all that he wished, regardless of consequences, which could never affect his position or his grandeur.

On the other hand, most unnecessary severity was exercised in regard to him, even when he had committed no fault, or when the error was so venial that a gentle reproof would have sufficed to open his eyes. The unfortunate boy was never allowed to be a child, and whilst still a mere baby his playthings were taken away on the pretext that a future King had something

better to do than indulge in pastimes which might have been permitted to the son of a commoner but which were impossible to the heir of an ancient Monarchy. The Queen, whose tenderness might have lightened her son's lot, durst not interfere even had she desired, and neither she nor the King took alarm or warning from peculiarities which were already evident in the character of their offspring and which ought to have been sedulously corrected with sympathy and patience.

No one seemed to love the poor child, except a nurserymaid called Lise, who in contrast to the severity which others exhibited, spoilt him to her heart's content, and humoured him with the foolishness so often found in people of her class. Later the Crown Prince was placed under a French governess, whose influence over him was so far pernicious that she studied to develop his natural haughtiness, and held up, as an example, the conduct and career of Louis XIV. of France, whose famous declaration, "L'État, c'est Moi," was duly dinned in his ears. She persuaded him that since he was bound to occupy the first place in his country, he need not heed anyone or anything, but simply carry through what he wanted, whether it were consonant or not with the real interests of his people. A French tutor who replaced her continued the stupid system of education she had inaugurated, and it is no wonder that in such circumstances the tyrannical temperament of the boy increased by what it was fed on.

Accordingly he grew more and more convinced of his

own importance, and occasionally experimented with his brother, Prince Otto, as on that day when, whilst playing together at Berchtesgaden, he suddenly threw him to the ground and pushed his handkerchief into the child's throat, exclaiming as he did so, "You are my subject; you must obey me; for one day I shall be your King." With difficulty an attendant who luckily appeared on the scene succeeded in wrenching the half-choked Otto from the Crown Prince's clutches. The story ultimately reached the ears of the King, who, instead of reproving the culprit in a reasonable way, gave him such a severe thrashing that he nearly succumbed to its effects, and ever afterwards cherished a kind of hatred of his father which never left him until the latter's death.

Again, the boy Princes were playing one winter afternoon in the English Garden in Munich. Otto had made a huge snowball which he showed with pride to his brother, plainly inviting his admiration. Ludwig instantly took it away from him notwithstanding his tears. Inquiring what was amiss, the tutor was informed, and forthwith took Ludwig to task.

"Your Royal Highness, when Prince Otto has made a snowball it belongs to him, and you have no right to take it from him."

"No right!" exclaimed the child. "Why am I a Crown Prince if I cannot do as I please?"

These two anecdotes—selected from many others just as typical—illustrate the false and mistaken notions

which presided over the education of the Bavarian Princes. In fact, so far as his children were concerned, King Maximilian seems to have done exactly all that he ought not to have done. He gave them no notions of the duties which were to be theirs in life, and did not even teach them the value of money.

This latter shortcoming is very important, as it accounts for the extravagances with which Ludwig II. was constantly bitterly reproached. For years his weekly allowance never exceeded ninety pfennings (not a shilling !) even at the age of sixteen. Therefore when, at nineteen, he became a Sovereign in possession of a Civil List of several millions of marks, it is scarcely surprising he thought this an inexhaustible treasure and had no idea what the vast sums of money which he spent right and left represented, believing it impossible to run through an income which, to his inexperienced eyes, appeared to be far larger than it was in reality.

It must not be forgotten that Ludwig was by nature exceedingly generous, and that he could never refuse anything he was asked for. Had he only been well directed in his youth, he would have left his mark upon the world as a great, instead of an unfortunate King. But everybody, from his parents down to the meanest of his attendants, perversely set themselves to develop the worst instead of the best side of a most complicated but at the same time most noble character. The cardinal misfortune of the Crown Prince was the complete isolation in which he was reared. The King did

not allow his sons to mingle with other children, and the only boy of his own age whom he was permitted from time to time to see was Count Holnstein, who was later to play so discreditable a part in the drama which led to the tragic death of Ludwig II.

Considering the singularities of disposition of the future Bavarian Sovereign, it was the bounden duty of his parents to have provided him with friends and comrades with whom he could exchange thoughts and opinions. He was intellectually the superior of his counsellors and attendants, and found it impracticable to sympathise with the few people whom he met, and even with his own brother, whom he loved fondly in spite of the differences which sometimes arose between them, but whose turn of mind was absolutely dissimilar to his own. This isolation led him to rely upon himself almost wholly and to shun society that could really help him, with the result that at last he was induced to seek the society of people inferior to himself in every way in social condition and education, and to unburden himself to them of the thoughts that pressed upon his teeming and abnormal brain.

In character Ludwig was far more like his grandfather Ludwig I.—whose eccentricities had culminated in his mad passion for the dancer Lola Montez, a passion that at last cost him his throne—than his own father, the sedate, stingy, and pedantic Maximilian. His inclinations were entirely artistic and, unfortunately for him, were never understood as they ought to have been.

Had he lived in the times of the old Roman Cæsars, he would have been considered a great Emperor, as his nature presented many analogies to that of the famous Adrian. Indeed, this epoch of history appealed to his instincts next after that of Louis XIV., who had been his ideal King ever since childhood. He had something despotic in him, tempered (as we have said) with a taste for solitude, a solitude in which he could indulge the dreams that were a part of his romantic disposition, and which led him to entertain high imaginings such as Sovereigns seldom possess.

For politics the King had no taste, though he understood it far better than he was given credit for; but it was repugnant to him, and he despised the meanness and unscrupulousness without which it can hardly ever be carried on successfully. The methods employed by Prussia in this field simply disgusted him, and though he was led by circumstance to lend himself to the establishment of a revived German Empire under the Hohenzollerns, he could not, later, forgive them for having confiscated the Imperial dignity, or himself for having helped them to do so.

Ludwig II. was a great patriot in his way; it was a pity, however, that his patriotism remained so passive and that his splendid isolation induced him to withdraw from the political arena rather than to engage in fight with a Power whose insolence he had felt, even whilst he had seemed to outsiders, who knew nothing of his character or disposition, to have acquiesced in all its

plots and plans. If we remember his attitude to the Royal House of Prussia after the war of 1870, we shall become convinced of the profound loathing with which he viewed the humiliation of his country and his race, when the battle of Sadowa settled, so to say, the future of Germany, and made Bavaria accept the situation created by the energy and genius of Prince Bismarck, by whose policy the whole of the North German Confederation had been taken to the bosom of that Prussia which had seemed to receive its death-blow at Jena.

This attitude, perhaps more than anything else in the conduct of the King, exasperated against him the adherents of the Prussian party in Bavaria, who, though far from numerous, were nevertheless extremely powerful, owing to the fact that nearly all the members of the Bavarian Royal Family had joined it, and had made themselves the humble servants of the Colossus who ruled in Berlin. The latter, however, curious though this must appear to those who have not studied the history of Germany since the Franco-Prussian War, was perhaps the personage who had the most sympathy with Ludwig II.

Bismarck was above everything a just man, in the abstract sense of that word. He could very well appreciate the remarkable qualities of the only Sovereign in Europe who had had the courage to oppose him, and would have liked to convert him to his views and make him his friend and in a certain measure collaborator. Later, political necessity, to which he always sub-

ordinated his conduct, turned him against Ludwig II.; but though he knew the latter to be a resolute adversary of Prussia and Prussian expansion, and ready to join hands with France against the newly-created German Empire, Bismarck still gave him the only possible advice that could have saved him, when the infamous conspiracy which culminated in the King's death was hatched. That advice was that Ludwig should go to Munich, show himself to his people, and call them to his help against the usurper who had determined to put him out of the way and to occupy his place. Unhappily this counsel was disregarded, with what consequences we all know; but it is nevertheless noteworthy that the Chancellor, hating Ludwig as he must have done, sufficiently recognised his influence and was sufficiently conscious of his great qualities as to offer him the hand which, to his lasting misfortune, the Bavarian King did not see his way to accept.

I deliberately use this word "misfortune," because it is obvious that even unscrupulous Prince Luitpold would have hesitated to fight his nephew in his own capital. Had Ludwig, therefore, retained possession of the throne which was snatched from him so ruthlessly, it is likely that the Prussian domination in Bavaria would have come to an end long ago, and that William II. would not have found the Southern States so willing to join hands with him in 1914 in his attack upon Russia and France. The disappearance of the only man capable of raising the banner of revolt against Prussia

was one of the most important factors in the World War provoked by Germany, which could not otherwise have stood four-square against the Allies. In the year 1866 were sown the seeds of the Evil Thing against which the Allies are fighting with such energy and courage.

CHAPTER III

A KING WITH IDEALS

ON the 10th of March, 1864, Maximilian II. of Bavaria breathed his last somewhat unexpectedly, that is to say, without any warning other than that afforded by his usual state of ill-health. During the short hours of the death struggle, he had time to bless his eldest son and successor and to wish, so it is said, that he might die as peacefully as himself, but recalling at the same time an old prophecy of Nostradamus which, for reasons I have not been able to ascertain, had been somehow associated with the destinies of the House of Wittelsbach.

This prediction, curious in view of what was to occur later, ran thus :

" Quand le Vendredi Saint tombera sur le jour de Saint George, Pâques sur le jour de Saint Marc, et la Fête Dieu sur le jour de Saint Jean, tout le Monde pleurera."

St. George was considered the patron saint of Bavaria, and the quaint saying just quoted had preoccupied the minds of many superstitious people in that country. King Maximilian had not escaped its influence, and remembered it, as we have seen, when on his

deathbed, whilst Ludwig II. was haunted by it throughout his short existence, and told several persons that he believed it to be associated with his reign, and that he had been most painfully affected in finding that his father, too, had spoken about it in his last hours.

Although the relations of the old Monarch with his heir had been distinctly cold, especially during the years immediately preceding his demise, his death nevertheless greatly pained his son, who, it is related, fainted when he heard himself for the first time addressed as King. He was about nineteen at the time, a mere boy not only in age but also in experience. Brought up as he had been, remote from any influence of the outside world, he could not at first realise the immense change which had been wrought in his position, and his brain, weak always, was very nearly turned by it. He had been kept apart from his fellow creatures, and never been allowed to enjoy independence, or to form his own circle of friends. Indeed, people had had no alternative but to avoid him, knowing as they did that the King did not approve of any attention being shown to the Crown Prince.

Suddenly, almost without notice, Ludwig found himself the cynosure of all eyes; everybody bowed down before him, flattered him and sought his favour; he was told that henceforward his every wish was law, and he, for whom Kingship had only represented an institution which governed all his doings, was now invested with all its attributes and majesty and power. Can

one wonder that he lost his balance, deprived as he was of guidance, left to the mercies of Ministers who looked askance at him, without a mother's affection or a wife's love to advise him? If he allowed his fancies to run riot, and imagined the power he wielded gave him the right to humour all the caprices of his imagination, it is what one might have expected.

Nevertheless, when he swore the oath required of him by the Constitution on his accession to the throne of his ancestors, he made a speech which was pronounced by those who had the opportunity of hearing it, to be an excellent one, full of reverence for the memory of his dead father, and of hopes that God would grant him strength to fulfil his duties for the welfare of his beloved Bavaria. An ominous incident in connection with this speech must not be omitted. The Berlin Press in reproducing it carefully substituted the word "Germany" for "Bavaria"; a garbling that roused Ludwig's ire to an uncommon degree. Already, then, the battle he was to fight against Prussia and Prussianism had begun, and it was to be pursued with unflinching energy throughout the brief reign of the unfortunate Monarch.

At that time Ludwig was the most popular personage in his whole kingdom. In the Bavarian Alps especially he was cherished and almost worshipped by the rude population, among whom he had always felt at home, and whom he knew to be friends, who cared for him for his own sake, and not because of what he could give

them. He was extraordinarily handsome, and his fine Roman head reminded one of those mythological deities whose image has passed down to us in the marble busts in the Vatican and other galleries. He possessed the rare faculty of exciting the enthusiasm of all who came into contact with him, and of inspiring them with admiration for his person as well as for his intellectual faculties. His was not a common nature, but one which had the elements of real greatness in it, together with the strong passions inherent in every human being raised suddenly from a state of dependence to a supreme position for which, though born to it, he was not fitted. He believed sincerely that he could carry everything before him, and by mere strength of will change the whole order of society.

As usual in such cases, courtiers and sycophants encouraged him to believe the dangerous maxim, that a King is the absolute master of the body and soul of his subjects, and by flattery and servility buttressed the innate haughtiness which was one of his greatest defects. Ludwig II. gradually became convinced that he was something absolutely different from the rest of mankind; a sort of demigod whose mission upon earth consisted in developing the artistic instincts of his generation, and of leading it into hitherto untrodden paths. He thought he had the right to dictate not only his will, but also his opinions to the whole world, and to start it on a road whence no return would be possible to the everyday humdrum existence which is the lot of humanity.

This young man only saw from the outside the magnitude and might of the dreams which chased each other in quick succession through his fertile mind and brain. He did not enter into the details inseparable from the execution of the most magnificent conception, and when these were pointed out to him, he grew impatient and refused to listen to what he called "nonsense." In a certain sense, the end justified the means in his eyes, and believing as he did that he had been placed by Providence in the lofty position which he occupied, he thought that this had been done in order that the world might be roused from the apathy in which he imagined it to be. It was his destiny, he fondly dreamed, to help the world to lift itself far into the skies, until it should understand high ideals about which it had known nothing before, thanks to the new notions of Art he had helped it to conceive and acquire. His imagination had never been healthy or normal, and the loneliness in which his youth had been passed —solitude in the sense that he had never found any sympathetic soul able to accompany him in the various flights of his fancy and to discuss quietly the questions that excited his curiosity or his ire—had had a demoralising influence over his mind.

He wanted to be a great King, but did not know how to become one; his education (as we may remind the reader) had neither prepared him for the position into which he was to be elevated at a moment's notice, nor in general for the battle of life which at times he figured

to himself to be something too beautiful for words, and at the meannesses of which he recoiled with disgust at other moments. One can fancifully say of him that he never really lived upon earth, but in some serene region about which the rest of humanity knew nothing and guessed even less. It is no marvel, therefore, that in all his enthusiasms—of which there were unfortunately but too many for his reputation as a Sovereign of well-balanced mind—he appeared to be eccentric in the eyes of those who could not understand them and who looked upon them as the symptoms of a diseased brain, or a disordered nervous system. Had he had any restraining influence beside him capable of warning him of the dangers to which he was exposing his too sensitive temperament, he might have come to regard existence as well as mankind with philosophical calm, if not with less of that excitement which ultimately turned out to be his most liberal endowment.

But he had no one to advise him, no one to disclose the perils to which his excitable mind exposed him, and he drifted into a state of semi-madness, in which nevertheless he preserved his sanity so far that he never allowed anyone to forget that he was THE KING, to whom everything ought to be forgiven, because he was the Lord's Anointed, whose actions could not be criticised or condemned. From the very first day of his accession to the Throne, he gave proofs of a misconceived firmness of character, which he hardly ever applied where he ought to have done, and which, whilst helping him to

accomplish useless manifestations of his will, often deserted him where it might have been of substantial help.

Notwithstanding all his defects, however, and perhaps on account of them, he also possessed several rare qualities, amongst which absolute sincerity and love of truth were the most prominent. Dissimulation was unknown to him. He always spoke out what he believed to be right, and made no mystery of his likes or dislikes. He was generous to a fault, partly through utter ignorance of the value of money. He showered presents upon presents on those whom he liked, and his innumerable boyish enthusiasms proceeded from the superabundance of affection with which his whole nature was penetrated. Unfortunately he was not able to guide his affection in the right direction, and which made him the prey of intriguers and parasites who, on the pretext of developing his love for Art, led him unconsciously into a path at the end of which lay demoralisation and the shells of those noble instincts with which Providence had enriched him, and which in time might have enabled him to achieve illustrious things and to leave the memory of a noble Monarch, the like of whom the world had not seen since the days of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table.

Paul Heyse, whose name was rather prominent among German authors at the time I am talking about, who had the opportunity of meeting Ludwig just after his accession to the throne, wrote of him thus : " What

strikes one especially in the person of the King, are his large dreamy eyes, that always seem to be looking into the unknown. But all that he says in contrast to this remarkable expression, which hardly ever leaves his face, is always to the point and free from any kind of embarrassment. He has a most clear judgment about the people who are around him, together with a knowledge of mankind which strikes one as quite remarkable, if one take into consideration the fact that he has been brought up in complete solitude, entirely apart from the world and from his fellow creatures."

Heyse was mistaken about the King's knowledge of mankind, the absence of which contributed so much to his future misfortunes; but otherwise his impression agrees with that which others who have known him well have expressed. Ludwig was a most fascinating personality, and was idolised by his subjects. From his very childhood to the day of his death, their affection for him never changed or failed him. Had he only realised its strength, he might have mustered sufficient courage to fight his enemies; but the very Sovereign who had declared himself convinced of the love entertained for him by his people, forgot all about it in the hour of his danger and accepted his cruel fate with an apathy which may have had in it the true elements of grandeur, but against which a mind less unhinged than his own would have most certainly rebelled.

About the time of his accession Ludwig II. became intimate with his lovely cousin, the Empress Elizabeth

of Austria. Their natures had much in common, and both seemed to feel more acutely than any of their numerous relatives the tragedy which had for so many centuries hovered over the head of the Wittelsbachs. Elizabeth was beautiful and lovely as a dream; she was clever, too, keenly, delicately clever, with a mind sharp enough to take at once the mental measurement of those whom she had occasion to meet. In her own way, she was perhaps as much imbued with that feeling of the dignity of Kings and Queens as was her cousin.

At the time when they became attracted to each other by the mysterious laws of sympathy which nothing can explain, the Empress had already tasted of the bitter fruits of disappointment, and sorrow had more than once bowed her proud, fair head under its crushing weight. Her intelligence bore more than one point of correspondence with that of Ludwig, and both had the same tastes and the same shyness as regarded their relations with the world in general and with their surroundings in particular. Elizabeth had learned to keep her moral sufferings locked up in her breast, and to remain silent and haughty before the public, that would have been delighted to watch her suffer. The young King, still in the flush of his newly-acquired independence and freedom, could nevertheless understand the mental tortures of the lonely woman who, amidst her grandeur, had also never found a friend she could trust. At Kissingen, where they spent the summer in 1864,

their natural affection for each other, coupled with the similarity of their tastes, drew them together, and from that time their friendship remained sincere and true until the end, in spite of the vicissitudes which later overtook them both.

Elizabeth would have liked her cousin to marry, and did her utmost to arrange a union for him with the only daughter of the Tsar Alexander II., the Grand Duchess Marie Alexandrovna, who eventually married the second son of Queen Victoria. The Tsarina would not have been averse from seeing her child wear the Bavarian Crown, and for some time it was believed that the marriage would take place; but although Ludwig seemed to have great sympathy for the young girl whom everybody wanted him to wed, and although he was most attentive to her as well as to her mother, yet he never uttered a word that could be interpreted as a desire to make the Princess his Queen. He did not say "No" when his Ministers urged the necessity of a decision on this momentous question, but he remained obstinately silent about his intentions. The matter dragged on for a time, until the Russian Court, seeing he would not speak, abandoned the idea. Although the visit of the Empress Marie to Kissingen, which she used to frequent every year for the benefit of her health, had been as usual announced for the summer of 1865, it did not take place.

Later it was discovered that strange relations between the young King and Richard Wagner had already

begun, and it was rumoured that the composer's influence had been exercised in a sense detrimental to the marriage which had been suggested to Ludwig, as it was afterwards effective also in causing the rupture of the Monarch's engagement with his cousin, the Duchess Sophie of Bavaria.

CHAPTER IV

ENTER RICHARD WAGNER

I HAVE just mentioned Richard Wagner. He played such an important and at the same time such an unwholesome part in the life of Ludwig II., that however reluctant one might feel to touch upon the subject, it is impossible to pass their friendship by in silence when explaining the causes which were directly or indirectly responsible for the catastrophe in which the Sovereign lost first his throne and then his life.

One must not forget that Wagner was at heart a Prussian (for Saxon Leipzig, where he was born, is not far from the border), deeply devoted to Prussia in spite of the insults which he continually hurled at it, and which most probably were but uttered to blind the world as to his real aims. Wagner incarnated all the selfishness, arrogance, self-conceit and ruthlessness of Prussia. Genius he had undoubtedly, but in addition he expected people to believe that he also incarnated a whole system of philosophy, morality, art and literature. This illusion arose from his own admiration of everything that he did, thought, or conceived. The man only thought about himself, and the gratification of his instincts. He was a degenerate, and it is inexplicable

that those who were lost in wonder at his achievements did not detect the more revolting features of his character. He was devoid of moral sense, and his craving for enjoyment was so strong that it caused him to resort to all kinds of unworthy subterfuge in order to gain his ends. He was a mass of affectation, and the satires written about him by the infuriated Bavarians rested on something more than imagination, because it is certain that he really had persuaded his small section of worshippers that it was indispensable to the development of his genius that he should live in the lap of luxury, wear silk dressing-gowns, and eat his dinner off gold plate.

Wagner's selfishness was monstrous, and it is doubtful whether, his compositions notwithstanding, he comprehended the true signification of art, considered in its best and purest sense; of that art which ennobles those who devote themselves to it, and which inspires them with all that is elevated in its intellectual, moral, and material bearings. This is the only art that has given to the world musical works such as the "Stabat Mater" of Palestrina, the Sonatas of Beethoven, and the "Messiah" of Handel; pictures such as the Sistine Madonna, or the "Adoration of the Shepherds" by Correggio; books like "Paradise Lost" of Milton, or the "Divina Commedia" of Dante. Those who wrote or painted them, did not wear purple and fine linen nor require gold plates for their dinner-service. They were inspired by that flame from Heaven which fills so entirely the souls of those who possess it that it makes

them indifferent to bodily comfort, keeps them absorbed in its splendour, and renders them ambitious of leaving to the generations unborn their conception of God's purposes and will.

No Prussian can be a real artist, though he may show himself an admirable comedian, and this is the only excuse one can find for Wagner. But even this will hardly stand when one recalls the evil influence he acquired over the mind of a mere boy, such as Ludwig was at the time they met—imbued with the dignity of his rank, yet unable to understand that he could only sustain it by living up to it. The simple Bavarian people felt this though their King did not, and their sentiment of devotion was shocked at seeing him the prey of a man in whom they recognised the adventurer as well as the musician. It is at least arguable that, had Ludwig never seen Wagner, the tragedy in which his reign and life terminated might never have occurred, and he might even have been spared the attacks of the disease to which his parents' antecedents coupled with his own education predisposed him. But upon a mind hereditarily disposed to eccentricity, the continuous exaltation in which Wagner artificially maintained him and the nervous tension and excitement of their association were destined to work havoc and precipitate catastrophe.

Whether the great composer deliberately destroyed the young Sovereign who had showered so many favours upon him, and had looked up to him as to a veritable

wonder-worker, or whether he was only the tool of people more clever and more unprincipled than himself, remains a mystery which so far has not been solved. The most charitable theory is that his intense selfishness and unscrupulousness made Richard Wagner unconsciously play the game of Ludwig's enemies, who persuaded him that the surest way to retain the post of confidant to the King—out of which the Bavarians longed to oust him—was to acquire such an influence over him as should overwhelm all who were hostile to the prosecution of Prussia's supremacy in the Fatherland. The conspiracy was admirably engineered, and one cannot definitely infer either Wagner's willingness or unwillingness to take part in it.

Outwardly he never missed an opportunity to speak evil against the Prussians, and almost the first step he took after he came to Munich was to become a naturalised Bavarian. On the other hand, there are proofs that he obeyed so thoroughly certain instructions from Berlin, that he excited the fierce resentment of the people. In consequence he was driven out of Munich, and forced to relinquish the post of chief adviser to the King. But, alas, when Ludwig's true friends at length prevailed and Wagner was expelled the King's presence the mischief had been done, and the King's intellectual and moral strength was broken.

One of the extraordinary features of this intercourse was that Ludwig was not at all musically gifted by nature. Indeed, one of his teachers once said he did

not even possess a musical ear. It is therefore likely that it was the dramatic rather than the musical in Wagner's works which attracted Ludwig's fancy and stirred his imagination. He was only sixteen when he was first taken to hear "Lohengrin" in Munich, and it appealed so much to him that he set to work at once to study all that Wagner had written and to follow the career of the artist with a morbid interest.

Having read a letter in which the composer had expressed a doubt whether he would ever find a Prince generous enough to enable him adequately to produce his musical works in public, the then Crown Prince of Bavaria exclaimed, "When I become King, I shall show the world how I appreciate that man's genius!" Ludwig now proved as good as his word. Hardly a month had elapsed after his accession when, through his major-domo Herr von Pfistermeister, he invited Richard Wagner to Munich. The invitation proved the more welcome since at that time the composer was head over ears in debt and had been obliged to fly in haste and secrecy from Vienna, where existence had become unbearable owing to his creditors' persecutions. The King also forwarded a ring with one large ruby, and accompanied the present with a note saying that "he burned as strongly as the stone shone with a desire to see the author and composer of 'Lohengrin.'" Their first meeting did not dispel Ludwig's illusions but was abundantly grateful to Wagner, who, to put it frankly, had been for years in search of a patron whom

he could exploit on the specious plea of sharing artistic impressions with him.

One has only to read the letter in which Wagner described his first interview with the King, to appreciate the spirit in which he accepted the extraordinarily good fortune which had befallen him, and to suspect his designs.

"You probably know already," he wrote to one of the few intimate friends he still possessed in Vienna, "that the young King of Bavaria has sent for me. I was introduced to him to-day. Unfortunately he is so handsome, so talented, and so gifted with precious qualities, that I am afraid his life will pass like a rapid dream in this wicked world of ours. He loves me with all the ardour and passion of a first love; he knows and understands everything about me as no one else except my own self can understand it. He wishes me to remain with him always, to work, to rest, to produce, and wants to give me everything that I desire. I must compose the Nibelungen, and he shall have them performed exactly as I would wish. I am to keep my independence and to be only his friend. I am to be free from every care and am to have all I require; only I must never leave him and always remain at his side. You can form no idea of the expression in his eyes. If he only might live long enough! All this is such a wonderful thing!"

On his part Ludwig succumbed at first sight. On the very next day after the interview he wrote to the

artist: "I wish you to be convinced that I mean to do everything in my power and means to compensate you for the sufferings and privations you have had to bear until this day. I shall deliver you for ever from the petty cares that have hung over your head, and shall devote myself to secure the peace you need to enable your wonderful genius to expand without obstacle. Unknown to yourself, you have been from my first youth the only source of joy I have ever known, a friend that has appealed to my feelings in a way no one has ever done before, a master and a teacher the like of whom I had never hoped Heaven would grant to me."

Another of Wagner's letters illustrates the tone which pervades this correspondence: he speaks of a visit paid to the King at the castle of Berg, the very residence where Ludwig was to end his days in such terrible circumstances twenty-two years later.

"I am always flying towards him," he says, "as towards a beloved mistress. I have never had such passion, such entire love and loving submission offered to me in my whole life before. And then this constant care for me, this timid affection, this joy with which he tells me how happy he feels to possess me. We sometimes sit for hours, lost in contemplation of each other's features and expression. If I wished it, his whole Court would be at my disposal, at least I am told so; but he would not conceive the possibility of my desiring to play a part in it, so real and so beautiful is everything in our intercourse. How happy I feel

thus, content in the knowledge that there is nothing I can ever want! We do not mind the world, and all we feel in our hearts goes on uninterruptedly without our troubling about anything else. In time I feel sure everybody here will also love me, and the immediate friends of the young King are happy to find me as I am and to know, what they all see, that my extraordinary influence over him can only do good to mankind."

CHAPTER V

THE FATAL FASCINATION

WHEN invited by the King to share his life and pursuits, Wagner was fifty-one, a man of wide experience, well able to "look after Number One." The man whose hospitality he was to abuse, was but a youth who had not yet seen his twenty-first birthday; to him the world was a sealed book. His enthusiastic temperament and vivid imagination made him a prey to the first influence that seized him and rendered him liable to embrace with passionate fervour the views of any person who should flatter him to the top of his bent, by praising and exalting, if need were, his artistic leanings and cravings for the unattainable.

For Ludwig love existed only from the cerebral point of view; and the secret of Wagner's complete control over him was the composer's hideous doctrine that the sensuous could most fully be satisfied by a blend of the artistic instincts of the imagination with the vicious. That was demoralising and soul-destroying teaching, if teaching it could be called. Indeed, the low moral tone of Wagner's conduct at this time, as well as throughout all his intercourse with the King, was deplorable. His love of money was as insatiable as his vanity was inordinate, and unfortunately Ludwig,

as he discovered to his cost, supplied both in ample measure. His egregious self-love stuck at nothing whereby the canonisation, so to call it, of his unworthy self might be achieved. Affection or gratitude for Ludwig he had none; though whilst persuading him to avoid the society of women, whose influence, he feared, might supplant him in the good opinion of the King, he did not scruple to carry on himself numberless *liaisons*, even with Cosima von Bülow, the wife of the man who had befriended him when he was in want, the woman, to do him justice, whom he afterwards married. This last adventure opened the King's eyes to the real character of his teacher and ideal, and the discovery of it was the principal cause of Wagner's exile from Munich.

But we are anticipating, as the novelists say. We must resume the tale of the composer's introduction to Ludwig. It may be described briefly but comprehensively as a repetition of certain incidents in Goethe's drama of *Faust*, when Mephistopheles seizes his victim's soul, never to let it escape until its doom is accomplished. Wagner also used his power without hesitation or remorse. A few days after his first visit to the castle of Berg, the King hired for him a splendid villa on the lake of Starnberg and had its garden transformed into a fairy-like bower of beautiful flowers and blossoms, which the composer plucked without compunction as a carpet for his bare feet which, with incredible vanity, he displayed to Ludwig, calling his

attention to their perfect shape. In due course the King showed that he did not care for anyone's society except Wagner's and began also to acquire the dangerous taste for isolation which was later to prove his bane, and which the composer encouraged in order to shut out every exterior influence which might thwart his future plans for the shameless exploitation under the guise of art, of his Sovereign's wealth, the only thing he cared for in the whole disgraceful affair.

Had it not been for him Ludwig would probably have married either his cousin the Duchess Sophie of Bavaria, to whom he was engaged for some months, or another Princess whose presence would have prevented him from indulging in the various extravagances to which he was led later through his disappointment with Wagner and his consequent bitterness against him. But it was to the musician's interest to keep his victim entirely to himself, and so he inspired him with a rooted distaste for marriage and women's society.

Wagner's next concern was to establish his position materially. So he prevailed upon the King to present him with a beautiful house in Munich, the only one, he declared, in which he could write and compose, because of its absolute privacy, for it stood in its own grounds and was surrounded by a large garden. The real reason for his choice was much more prosaic. The truth is that the money value of the mansion was far in excess of what had been represented to Ludwig, and it was plainly, therefore, only good business to

get another to buy it for him. He had the house furnished with luxurious extravagance in the "loud" taste which was characteristic of him, for he realised in full the sense of the word "colossal" which the Prussians love to bestow on everything and everybody that fills their imagination. He was also granted a yearly income of 4000 florins, but this was only upon paper, because the sums which, on one pretext or another, he extorted from the King amounted to several millions.

It was this frightful waste which first set the Bavarians against Wagner and which decided the Government to make representations to the young Sovereign, who had no idea of what his fancy and delusions were costing the State as well as his private purse. The bulk of the fortune he inherited from his father consisted in large sums which had been economised and invested by Maximilian II., who, having spent his life in fear of an annexation of Bavaria by Prussia, which he loathed and whose ambitious designs he dreaded, had laudably wished to put his children out of the way of want. Apart from this, Ludwig could dispose of a Civil List of two millions of florins, of which half a million had to be paid to his grandfather Ludwig I. in the exile to which the latter had retired after his voluntary abdication and secret marriage with Lola Montez. Other charges swallowed more than another million, so that what was left for the King's private expenses did not exceed 300,000 florins, which was quite sufficient at the time but

certainly did not allow of the millions which Wagner squandered upon his grandiose projects, which included the construction of a gigantic theatre in Munich, where his works could be produced under the only conditions he deemed worthy of them.

Two responsible officers of the Royal Household and Exchequer, who had enjoyed the complete confidence of Maximilian II., thought it incumbent upon them seriously to represent to Ludwig that he could not indulge in the enormous and wasteful expenditure he contemplated without gravely compromising not only his own fortune but also that of the whole Royal Family. The Queen Mother and old Ludwig, in his exile, participated in these protestations.

Accordingly the Ministry and the aristocracy, the more incensed against Wagner in that it attributed to his influence the solitude in which the King dwelt, conspired to procure the removal of the composer from the King's person and his expulsion from Bavaria. Some talked of him as a secret agent who wanted to draw the Sovereign into the inner circle of Prussian politics, which were detested beyond words throughout Southern Germany. Public feeling was excited against him in every possible manner, and the Press began to demand his dismissal in authoritative tones. Ludwig, however, remained unmoved and proceeded to execute his friend's plans regardless of consequences. From this epoch one traces the origin of the King's numerous debts and the era of ruinous extravagances that brought

about most of his misfortunes. Had he not been so generally beloved, a revolution to place his brother Prince Otto on the throne would have come within the sphere of practicable politics.

But the Bavarians were devoted to their young King, whose manly beauty and generous nature had attracted them, together with the singular charm which emanated from his whole person. And so they gave him repeated chances to return to a reasonable appreciation of things and to give up of his own accord his affections for the man who had impressed his immature imagination. The Tempter proved the stronger and, in the teeth of all opposition, the first performance of "Tristan and Isolde," the favourite work of Wagner, took place at Munich on the 10th of June, 1865.

It was a triumph for the composer, but whether it were spontaneous or purchased by a lavish distribution of money is a moot question. The King at all events was wild with delight and, on the eve of the second performance, wrote to Wagner from the castle of Berg, whither he had repaired to rest after the emotions of the first night, a letter the like of which has perhaps never been penned by a royal personage, not even when in love with the most beautiful of women.

"WONDERFUL, DIVINE FRIEND!" it began, "I can hardly find patience to wait until to-morrow, so ardently do I long for the second representation of your marvellous work. You have written to Pfistermeister" [Master of

the Royal Household] "expressing the hope that my love for your performance has not been lessened by the rather weak and imperfect manner in which the part of 'Kurwenal' was interpreted by Mitterwurzer!

"Beloved one! How could you allow such a thought to cross your mind? I am enthusiastic and moved beyond words! I am dying to hear once more your wonderful music, that divine work with which your spirit has blessed us!

"Who can see it, hear it, understand it, without feeling happy beyond all earthly bliss? It is so splendid, so touching, so perfect, that my whole soul rises up in joy. Glory to its creator and let us pray to him!

"My dear friend, will you be good enough to tell the wonderful artists, Schnorr and Carolsfeld, that their performance delighted me and convey to them my heartfelt thanks for all their trouble. Make me joyful, I entreat you, by writing to me as soon as possible.

"My dearest friend, assure me that your courage to create more wonders shall not desert you in the future. I implore you, in the name of all we hold sacred, not to deprive those whom you fill with joy, of one of these blessings which usually God alone can confer upon mankind.

"You and God!!

"Until death, and beyond into eternity,

"Your faithful

"Ludwig.

"Berg, 12th June, 1865."

In another letter, dated August 4th of the same year, we find a passage even more characteristic of the kind of unwholesome influence Wagner had obtained over the mind and imagination of the young King.

"I find myself at present," writes the latter, "in a little mountain hut, with the fresh atmosphere of the Alps about me, and I am happy amidst all the beauties of Nature which surround me in thinking of the unique star which lights up with its glow the whole of my existence. Would that I could feel quite sure it has found rest and peace in my affection, and that I could contribute to its joy and bliss! May the Lord God grant to it the blessings it deserves and save it from being profaned by the eyes of the vain and empty world and help it to pursue the path it has elected to follow!

"I am devoted to you" [in German, "Thee"], "to you alone, and live only for you!

"Until death your own faithful

"LUDWIG."

Wagner did not scruple to show these passionate letters to his immediate friends, and one may imagine the opinion thus formed of the King's mental capacity and moral standard.

CHAPTER VI

THE PRUSSIAN AGENT

HARDLY had the curtain fallen on the last act of "Tristan," when criticisms bitterly assailed both Wagner and the King, who was reproached with the friendship into which he had admitted the composer. The behaviour of the Master justified most of these animadversions. Not only did he boast of his influence with the Monarch, but he blatantly announced his intentions of overthrowing the Ministry then in power. Nor were the people behindhand in expressing their disapproval of the relations between their Sovereign and a man who openly declared that he meant to regenerate the world by making it conform to his singular views about Art, love and general progress, and who, Rumour had it, was totally unfit to conduct any scheme of reform. His incessant demands for money became known partly through the judicious indiscretions of those whom Ludwig ordered to satisfy them, and the people, who had always hated the Prussians, cordially denounced Wagner, whom it identified with the despised nation.

Soon Wagner's presence at Munich and assiduous attendance on Ludwig were commented on as inspired

by the Cabinet of Berlin, which was desirous of having near the Bavarian Monarch a man entirely at its beck and call. Rumours of a war with Austria were already afloat, but it was still doubtful which side Bavaria would support. Newspaper articles appeared in which Wagner was pictured as a greedy, grasping man, with no thought for anything but for his own self. His genius began to be discussed and his affectations ridiculed and shown up in a comical way. The *Volkszeitung*, an organ which exercised considerable influence in Southern Germany, attacked the King's favourite with a vigour that would have excited greater surprise had not public opinion been ripe for its strictures.

"We hear from well-informed sources," it wrote early in 1866, "that in less than a year, Wagner has obtained from the King's privy purse as well as from the State Exchequer no less than one million and nine hundred thousand florins. We cannot guarantee the accuracy of this statement, but what we can affirm as a certainty is, that Wagner insisted a few weeks ago upon being given forty thousand florins to enable him to continue his expensive habits. Herr von Pfistermeister has advised the Monarch not to comply with this request. The consequence has been that Richard Wagner, in his rage, has addressed the rudest of letters to Herr von Pfistermeister and succeeded in procuring the sum which he craved for."

Nor was this journal left to carry on its campaign alone. The Conservative party, which had never

been able to digest Wagner and his perpetual rivalry of the horse-leech's two daughters, and, *per contra*, admired Pfistermeister for his courage in withstanding the extravagance of the King, initiated an independent campaign against the musician whose downfall it hoped to accomplish.

What particularly incensed opinion throughout Bavaria against the composer was that, almost simultaneously with the production of "Tristan," he had asked Ludwig to create him general administrator of the Civil List, an unheard-of function which would have enabled him to escape the audit and control of the Royal Cashier. Another brilliant idea which he had laid before the King comprised the foundation of a new school for music under the supervision of Hans von Bülow, whose wife was one day to become the wife of Wagner. The Conservatory was to be subject to different reforms in its organisation, and its professors were to be collaborators in a musical journal from which Wagner hoped great things, in the way of the dissemination of his opinions and views in regard to the study of music in general and his own compositions in particular.

He was great on publicity, for he also tried to persuade Ludwig to establish a daily political paper to spread Prussian Kultur, which he considered to be the only real and satisfactory education in the world. Needless to say, this paper was to become in time the organ of the political views favoured in Berlin, and

to preach the advisability of the common action of the Southern German States with Prussia in respect of foreign affairs. Wagner proposed to entrust the editorship of the new organ to Julius Fröbel, formerly one of the agents of the Austrian Government during the *régime* of the Schmerling Ministry. When Fröbel had agreed to accept the post, Wagner sent to him, in September, 1865, two voluminous memoirs, which set forth his views on the political situation in general, and a copy of which he had submitted to the King.

Oddly enough, before these memoirs reached him, Fröbel had received a letter from a high police official in Munich, who was in very close relations with the Bavarian Cabinet, warning him against entering into any dealings with Wagner, whose stay in Munich would be short and who would " most certainly drag down with him in his fall all who were suspected to have been his creatures." Still more oddly, the King had been warned against Fröbel and spoke one day at Hohenschwangau with Wagner on the subject, telling him that " he would feel concerned for the future peace of Bavaria, if he had near him a man who was well known to have approved of the summoning of the German Parliament, and who could scarcely be expected to abandon his ideas and opinions at short notice."

Thereupon the plan of founding a big newspaper in Bavaria fell through and was never taken up again, but this incident suffices to demonstrate that it was not upon artistic and financial matters only that Wagner

aspired to influence the King. Politics also occupied his attention, and it may be reasonably inferred from certain information which came to light at a later date that a certain party meant to make use of the composer as its cat's-paw. Ludwig's sympathies, it was notorious, were entirely upon the side of the policy pursued by Austria, to whose reigning House he was bound by so many ties. The Berlin Government was already pondering the consequences of its premeditated aggression upon the realm of the Habsburgs, and it knew very well that the intervention of Bavaria in the expected conflict would prove of immense importance to the side with which it would throw in its lot. Every possible effort was, therefore, made to enlist the King's support for Bismarck's policy. Some curious details on the subject appear in a letter, dated 17th January, 1867, which Wagner addressed to one of his friends, Dr. Schanzenbach, and in which he describes incidents that occurred during the last weeks of his sojourn in Munich.

"During the visit I paid to the King at Hohenschwangau, in November, 1865," he writes, "the secretary of his Majesty's private chancery, Lutz, explained to me the opinions existing among the members of the Government then in power—with the evident intention of obtaining my co-operation in their schemes—opinions which were founded on their conviction that it was impossible to place any reliance whatever upon Austria, and still more to have anything to do with a German

Parliament; but that an arrangement with Bismarck and collaboration with the new tendencies towards which Prussian politics were evidently drifting, might prove profitable to the authority of the King in Bavaria, the more so, since it was intended to re-establish the Bavarian Constitution as it was before the events of 1848. As the matter concerned the strengthening of the Royal authority and prerogatives, Herr von Lutz supposed that, being the intimate friend of the King, I would willingly consent to act in accord with the Government on this important question. I replied that it was useless to make these overtures to me, because I had nothing to do with the conduct of politics in general, and understood nothing about the interests of the Bavarian State."

This reply, assuming it was really made by Wagner, was bluff, meant to hide the game he was playing with great caution and considerable ability. So much must be conceded to him, because from what we can gather from several of his letters written during 1865, he believed, or pretended to believe, that Ludwig II. was worthy of wearing the German Imperial Crown, and for this reason desired that the King should, if need be, head the movement in favour of the restoration of the German Empire, a movement—though with a different Imperator—which was fanned and kept alive by Bismarck's manœuvres.

Obviously Wagner hoped his friend might be the first to assume the Imperial authority, and, to induce

him to entertain the idea, persuaded him that the new Empire would be essentially peaceful, and that one of its first acts would be to suppress Prussian militarism and to establish throughout Germany a militia on the Swiss pattern, thus doing away with the maintenance of a regular army. The programme was certainly likely to tempt a mind of an idealistic turn and Ludwig might have felt inclined to give his adhesion to it. But he had revealed to some members of his Government the gist of the proposals which Wagner had submitted to him, when he was speedily enlightened as to the double game the composer was playing and learned that he had in reality been furthering the interests of Prussia. It was clear that in dangling before Ludwig's eyes the prospect of becoming Emperor, Wagner had thought of himself alone, for there was little doubt but that he had been promised ample recompense if he were clever enough to induce the King to support the revived German Empire, although everyone knew that Ludwig of Bavaria had not the smallest chance of being chosen the first Emperor.

Menaced by various influences, more or less subterranean and largely engineered by Wagner, the Bavarian Cabinet retaliated by means of the organs at its disposal, and inspired articles vigorously exposed the composer's ruthless exploitation of his Sovereign. The polemics grew daily more bitter, and at last the people of Munich were drawn into the fray. One must never forget that, to the Bavarians, he represented the

ever-hateful Prussia, whose agent he was supposed and reported to be. The nation was frantic lest, owing to his unbounded authority, Wagner might beguile the King to support a policy which aimed at nothing less than the suppression of the independence of Bavaria, and which would have transformed Ludwig into a vassal of those Hohenzollerns upon whom the Wittelsbachs had always looked with more or less disdain and condescension, deeming their nobility to be vastly inferior to their own. Unhappily the nation's fears and apprehensions were so grave and acute that they ultimately caused a permanent relaxation of the links of affection which had hitherto united them to their King.

CHAPTER VII

LETTERS FROM THE ALPS

MUCH later, in point of fact after he had been for some years an exile from Munich and had fallen under the displeasure of the King—at least outwardly, for, as we shall see, their relations were never really broken off—Wagner tried to clear himself from the charge of interfering in the inner politics of the Bavarian State. His friends, too, declared that everything which had been written on that subject was calumny. It is therefore necessary, in order to show the part played by Wagner at this juncture in Ludwig II.'s life, to linger a little longer on the story of these years and to explain his various intrigues.

After the success of "Tristan and Isolde," he had hoped the young Sovereign might always be amenable to his guidance, but he was to discover that he had been out in his reckoning. For one thing his favourite scheme of a new school of German music in Munich had to be abandoned, owing to the hostility of the Government, the various members of which had unanimously pronounced against it. This perturbed Wagner, who, a few days after the second performance of "Tristan," on the 16th of June, 1865, wrote to his

friend, the journalist Uhl in Vienna, in the following terms :

"In spite of the general enthusiasm of all my friends, I fear I shall find many material obstacles in my way. I ought to succeed if I take into consideration the strength of mind and the wonderful talents of my royal friend, but I feel so weary and so strained in mind and nerves that I fear I will not be able to go on with the struggle against the mean but powerful elements arrayed against me."

In these words he alluded to the secret opposition of the Cabinet to his plans as well as his person, an opposition headed by the Queen Mother, the old exiled Ludwig I. and the latter's brother, Prince Charles. In order to counteract their influence Wagner had persuaded Ludwig II. to see his Ministers as seldom as possible, a state of things which could only bring about the most dangerous consequences and which ultimately precipitated the final catastrophe. It opened the way for unconstitutional influences upon the Monarch, and strengthened the hold upon him which his private secretary had already acquired. Wagner believed he had a strong partisan in the secretary, but here he blundered badly, for Herr von Eisenhart, who had cherished from the first an antipathy against the musician, worked as hard as he could to promote his downfall.

Having thus detached Ludwig from the members of his Government, Wagner proceeded to chum up to

the Progressive party, which was then in opposition and the sympathies of which were distinctly Prussian, and organised meetings with its leaders which were generally held in a popular restaurant or beer-house called " The Monkey Box." There a campaign was organised against the Royal Treasurer, Herr von Hoffmann, and the Master of the King's Household, Herr von Pfistermeister, the first step of which consisted in the publication in the *Neueste Nachrichten* on July 15th, 1865, of a declaration of a sculptor named Ruf, accusing the Royal Treasurer of wilfully disregarding the commands of the King and of having in presence of Pfistermeister told him that " when the King ordered anything more in the way of artistic work, he, Ruf, had first to ascertain whether it was necessary to execute the order." The two officials brought an action for libel against the sculptor, who was sentenced to pay a fine of twenty florins. Thus the first attack against the Sovereign's servants not only failed but, on the contrary, brought them again into the favour of their royal master, who had ignored them during the weeks preceding the first performance of " Tristan." He began to listen to them once more, much to the distress of Wagner and of the latter's friends, a distress expressed in a letter from Hans von Bülow, which we shall reproduce in its original French, and which was dated July 31st, 1865 :

" Entouré de méchants serviteurs, dont la jeunesse du Monarque ne discerne pas encore toute la perfidie

et la sourde opposition, l'auguste ami de Wagner sera forcé à un changement et de système et des personnes qui le représentent dans son entourage actuel. Voilà où il faut aboutir maintenant le plus tôt possible."

(" Surrounded as he is by wicked servants, whose treachery and latent opposition the Monarch's youth prevents him from noticing, the august friend of Wagner will be compelled to change both the system and the people who at present surround him. This is what it will have to come to as soon as possible.")

The reader will notice the hidden threat contained in the last words of this epistle of a man who, at the time it was written, was in the full confidence of Wagner, who believed he could effect the dismissal of the Cabinet in consequence of the King's increasing affection for him. Of this he felt the more assured, because almost daily he received from Ludwig letters full of love and enthusiasm, which deserve to be called the lucubrations of an unsettled, not to say diseased mind, and which only an unscrupulous person would dare make use of systematically to exploit the writer's purse, or, more briefly, to blackmail him.

We shall reproduce a letter in order to illustrate the troubled state into which the unfortunate Ludwig had been plunged.

" My only and my beloved Friend,

" I must, before everything else, express my best thanks for the two precious letters you have

written to me. I received the first one in my beautiful castle of Hohenschwangau, the second here, in the lovely mountain hut where I am staying for the present. . . .

" I come unfortunately every day more and more to the conclusion that our mutual intentions as well as our efforts to further the cause of pure art in general are understood only by a very few.

" Beloved, do not be anxious, because everything shall nevertheless be done, every longing fulfilled ! It is not in vain I am burning with such a fire of enthusiasm for all that you do, an enthusiasm which increases as the weeks and the days go by. This must bear fruit. Hail to you and to that art which you represent ! May God grant that your present sojourn in the country and in our beautiful German woods, bring you courage and good health ! . . . And when we shall be no longer in this world, our work shall survive us in spite of everything, and remain as a proof of what we have done for that sacred cause of art to which we are both devoted.

" When is my friend thinking of returning to town after his stay in our lovely forests ? Should the place not suit you, then, my beloved, I implore you to choose any other of my residences, and it will be put at your disposal. You have only to say the word. Everything that belongs to me is yours also.

" Perhaps we can meet somewhere on the road, 'between the forest and the world,' as you express

yourself. Where will Siegfried elect to live after he has wakened Brünnhilde? Ah! when will the Saviour appear and return to the Rhine the ring snatched out of its depths? Forgive, forgive me, my beloved friend, my longing for you leaves me no peace. When I think of my Lohengrin, of my Tristan, when I remember that the spirit who has called them to life, is really there, that nothing except its own productions can ever equal what it has done, that in the centuries to come nothing like it will ever appear, then indeed I cannot keep silent, I must speak.

"Do not allow discouragement to depress you! think of the future! Everything I can do for you I shall do. Perhaps it may interest my beloved friend to know something about what I have lately been doing? On the day when I had the joy to see you last at Berg, I went to my dear Hohenschwangau, which I have always loved since my earliest childhood, to that place where I read for the first time your poems, 'Tristan and Isolde,' and the 'Ring of the Niebelungen.' I found my stay so pleasant, that I determined not to return to Berg, but to remain there for a longer time than I had at first intended.

"For the present I am once more in the mountain hut, where I like to retire sometimes from the noise of the world, to enjoy the fresh air from the Alps, and the beautiful Nature, whilst thinking always of the one star which illuminates my whole life, of the one Being I care for. If only I could feel sure that you

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From the Portrait painted to the order of Ludw[illegible]

are happy and that I can contribute to your enjoyment and to the peace of your mind!

"Once more, Hail to you, and may God Almighty bless you, grant you peace, and save you from the profane glances of a vain and empty world, that cannot appreciate you!

"I am devoted to you, only to you, to you for all my life. Until death your own, your faithful

"LUDWIG.

"PRUSCHLING, 4th August, 1865."

After receiving this outburst of sentiment, Wagner decided to go and see the King. On the 9th of August he arrived at Pruschling, where he remained alone with Ludwig until the 20th of that month. On the 21st he was once more in Munich, whence he intended to pay another visit to the King at Hohenschwangau.

Much to his disappointment, however, the plan fell through, because at the same time the King of Prussia announced his visit, which entirely upset Ludwig, who wrote to Wagner:

"I feel so unhappy not to be able to be with you and to see you on my birthday, which this disappointment entirely spoils!"

King William had been as usual at Gastein for a cure, and on his way back had stopped at Munich, where he left Count von Bismarck to confer with the Bavarian Prime Minister, von der Pfordten, and himself repaired to Hohenschwangau, where he arrived in

time for the celebration of Ludwig's twentieth birthday. This, as we have said, prevented Wagner's visit, much to his wrath, and he owned himself later that he had felt aggrieved at not having persuaded the King to excuse himself on some pretext or other from meeting his uncle, and to leave to his mother the Dowager Queen the duty of entertaining his Prussian brother. But at that time Ludwig was still alive to his obligations as a Sovereign, and declined to be guilty of the gross breach of etiquette which such a step would have involved, and for once Wagner's influence failed.

There ensued some degree of coolness in the relations between the two friends for the first time since they had become intimate. On the 2nd of October the King came to Munich for a few days. Wagner was then in such financial straits that he was compelled to beg his royal friend to give him 40,000 florins to pay his most urgent debts. Pfistermeister energetically opposed this " unheard-of request," which caused a final breach between him and Wagner. Nevertheless, Ludwig agreed to the composer's demand, and as the Royal Treasurer, Herr von Hoffmann, refused to send the sum, Frau Cosima von Bülow herself went to fetch it with a letter from the King.

Imagine her surprise when the Treasurer counted it out to her in silver pieces, with which he filled several large bags, probably in the hope that the sight of them during their transport to Wagner's house would excite the public against him, an expectation in which he was

not mistaken. After this reconciliation between the composer and the members of the King's household was impossible, and the musician was the first to throw down the gauntlet and open hostilities against those who should hinder, actively or passively, his designs on the Royal Exchequer.

CHAPTER VIII

"PULL DEVIL, PULL BAKER"

SAITH the French proverb, "It is only by his friends a man is betrayed," and this proved to be the case with Wagner in respect of the political influence over Ludwig, which he so strenuously denied having tried to wield, but for which he worked so steadily all the time he remained in close and intimate friendship with the young Monarch. We have this on excellent evidence in a letter written from the painter Peter van Cornelius to his future bride, which has been published with his other correspondence.

"There is one thing I have never mentioned to you until now, and that is that Wagner has begun to touch upon political questions in his intercourse with the King, that he has become a kind of Marquis de Posa. It seems that the King has requested him to give him his view on German affairs in general, and ever since Wagner has expounded his opinions in long letters which are forwarded regularly. When Bülow told me this I felt a shudder run down my back, because I saw that would be the beginning of the end."

In the matter of this political guidance the astounding thing was that though Wagner was at daggers drawn with

the Cabinet, yet some of its members pursued similar aims to those he espoused, advocating the sacrifice of the independence of Bavaria in favour of Prussia's hegemony in Germany. But whilst Herr von der Pfordten, the Prime Minister, was inclined to agree with the Berlin policy purely from political convictions, Wagner did so out of interested and selfish motives. Wagner believed that the art of which he was the high priest could only prosper if Prussia became the predominant power in Europe, and also because he saw that coin as well as *kudos* would be gained if he made himself the instrument of Prussian politics and of the line of action which he had learned Bismarck meant to adopt.

Pfordten, however, in spite of his sympathies with Berlin, wished to eliminate the influence of Wagner altogether, a fact of which the latter was perfectly well aware and which only strengthened him in his determination to effect the overthrow of the Cabinet. He caused the newspapers which supported his different plans and intrigues to disseminate the rumour that a Ministerial crisis was imminent, and set himself to excite not only public opinion but also the feelings of the irresolute King against the responsible advisers of the Crown. But with characteristic caution, he refrained from personal relations with the different journalists whose attacks he had instigated by private information, but used as his intermediaries his old friend Frederick Pechts and Frau von Bülow. These communicated Wagner's desires to Karl Brater, the

editor of the *Weekly Messenger* of the Progressive party in Bavaria, and to Julius Knorr, the editor of the *Neueste Nachrichten.* Accordingly the following confidential paragraph appeared in the former journal on the 14th of October, 1865 :

" According to information received from Munich it seems that a Ministerial crisis has broken out there, that it is intended to choose the new advisers of the King from the ranks of the reactionary party, and that Herr von der Pfordten himself is working in that direction. So far, however, the King's sanction to these plans has not been obtained."

This paragraph was taken up by the *Neueste Nachrichten*, which on the 18th of October commented upon it and added that, " It is well known that our King, Ludwig II., in the innocence and inexperience of his youth, is inclined to look upon things and people from the high ideal which he has created for himself, and which has partly been derived from the works of our great national poets. But it is also common knowledge that his mode of viewing the practical events of the day is arousing much anxiety in Court circles and the highest aristocracy in the land, as well as among the partisans of the Papal power and the bureaucrats. One does not know what will happen, nor where this state of things will lead the country, but one is aware of the disposition of the Sovereign and can assume with certainty that it would only be in case of his being wilfully misled that he would consent to a change

of Ministers that would satisfy the parties just mentioned."

On the 17th of October, that is, on the day before the publication of this article in the *Neueste Nachrichten*, Ludwig came from Hohenschwangau to Munich, to accompany his mother, the Dowager Queen, to the theatre, where she had not been seen since the death of Maximilian II., and where she was welcomed with an ovation. The King did not make a long stay in his capital, and on the 1st of November returned to Hohenschwangau, where he invited Wagner to join him next day. What passed between them has not been divulged, but on the 7th of November, Herr von Neumayer, the Minister of the Interior, sent in his resignation, which was accepted by the Sovereign.

This aroused great indignation in the country. Neumayer was a man of integrity and represented in the Cabinet the anti-Prussian policy with which the bulk of the population sympathised. His retreat left the field free to Prussian intrigues and to the undisputed sway of Wagner and his intimate friends over the King.

National fears assumed a more definite shape than they had done hitherto, and Wagner was still at Hohenschwangau when the principal organ of the Democratic party, the *Nürnberger Anzeiger*, which the King liked to read, had the courage to declare, in a leading article, " that when the Sovereign was induced to remain seven months of the year far from his Ministers, without any communication with them, surrounded only by that

unconstitutional Institution, the Private Secretaryship, he was badly advised and was causing great anxiety to his faithful subjects." The article produced an immense sensation and was reproduced by most of the newspapers throughout the country, which headed their remarks upon its contents with the title, "Away with the Private Secretaryship." Ludwig's ire was aroused to an uncommon degree.

One feature of this journalistic warfare was that it was carried on, on the one side, by Wagner, who wished to do away with the chief officials of the Royal Household—Herr von Hoffmann and Herr von Pfistermeister—and, on the other, by the friends of these gentlemen, who wanted to oblige the King to dismiss the musician, to whose pernicious influence they objected. Each party was the dupe of the other, and whilst desirous of destroying its adversary, was also working towards its own annihilation.

Wagner's insatiable avarice, however, supplied his enemies with one strong card. With amazing folly his demands for money, instead of diminishing, increased every day, and furnished abundance of reasons for the agitation against him. The Clerical party, which saw its privileges threatened by the accession of a Ministry composed of the musician's friends, also made common cause with the malcontents and allied itself to the Conservatives and the Court section that led the opposition against the King's favourite.

Hence the principal organ of that party, the *Volks-*

bote, or *People's Messenger*, entered the arena. "That the present campaign against the Private Secretaryship," it wrote, "is not, as people may think, directed against the office but against the men who form part of the Royal Household and the Cabinet, and especially against von Pfistermeister and von Hoffmann. These two men, it appears, must be removed in order that certain calls upon the Royal Exchequer may be made with impunity. Is it not a fact that, in less than one year, Richard Wagner has cost the King the sum of 190,000 florins, and that during the last few weeks he has demanded 40,000 florins more for the needs of his luxurious existence? The *Volksbote* can vouch for the facts that Herr von Pfistermeister, in obedience to his sense of duty, advised the King not to yield to this renewed demand for money, and that, in consequence of this attitude, Wagner wrote him an insolent letter in which he intimated, among other things, that he would nevertheless obtain what he wanted. We must also draw the notice of our readers to the circumstance that the article which caused such a sensation in the *Nürnberger Anzieger*, appeared in that paper whilst Wagner was staying at Hohenschwangau. The *Volksbote* will not go so far as to say that it was Wagner that wrote it, but in the circumstances one may assume that he was not a stranger to its contents. Another matter which one may view with great suspicion is that the people interested in the removal of the officials of the King's Household do not advocate this step from any

wish to facilitate the duties of the constitutional advisers of the Crown, or to further the interests of the members of the Cabinet. It is because they desire to take the place of the men against whom they are exciting public opinion and the King's displeasure, and especially because they must either remove the obstacles which prevent exploitation of certain financial resources which we refrain from particularising, or obtain a free field for their democratic tendencies."

As soon as he became acquainted with the contents of this article, Wagner forwarded it to the King, with a letter in which he declared that it must have been inspired by Herr von Hoffmann and Herr von Pfistermeister and their friends, and advised Ludwig to dismiss them immediately and recall Herr von Neumayer, whom he had dismissed a few weeks before with every circumstance of contumely. This step he justified by the absence of any other man whom he could recommend to the Sovereign's notice, and no doubt he was also animated by the hope that von Neumayer would feel grateful to him for having restored him to favour and would, therefore, no longer thwart his plans.

Ludwig, however, for once, would not be convinced, and replied to his friend with surprising independence of spirit:

"I had," he wrote, "excellent reasons for dismissing von Neumayer and for depriving him for awhile of my Royal favour and confidence, and it would therefore be out of the question to ask the man

whom I had serious grounds to be displeased with to form a new Ministry. Nor do I think it advisable to dismiss von Pfistermeister and the other members of my Household. The time for that has not yet arrived. I have good reasons, believe me, for what I tell you, and I do so in the most decided manner. The article you have sent to me is shameful. Oh! in what a wicked, demoralised world we live! You will be surprised when I tell you that 'the article has not been inspired by any member of my Household,' though it looks as if this were the case. We must not trouble ourselves about what the Press says; it is, after all, powerless to do anything. You must not lay too much stress on the remarks of the *Volksbote*, my dear friend. We know, we understand, we love each other, and the Powers of Darkness will not prevail against us.

"Your devoted friend,

"Ludwig.

"Hohenschwangau, 27th November, 1865."

Anyone but Wagner would have felt discouraged at this resistance on the part of the pliable King, for such he had found him until now. But the musician, wrapped up in superb self-conceit, would renounce none of his plans, and we shall see how he attempted to carry them through, in spite of all opposition, whether that of public men or of Ludwig.

CHAPTER IX

THE CASE FOR THE DEFENCE

WE have seen that through the intervention of his two greatest friends, Frederick Pechts and Frau Cosima von Bülow, Wagner had entered into indirect relations with Julius Knorr, the editor of the *Neueste Nachrichten*, then, as now, one of the most influential newspapers in Bavaria. After he had received the King's letter telling him that he would neither recall von Neumayer nor part with the members of his Household, Wagner caused a lengthy but anonymous letter to the editor to be inserted in the *Nachrichten*, cunningly giving, apparently from a stranger, an impartial statement of the case.

"You wish to hear from me," said this ingenuous writer, "details about Wagner's position and the place he occupies in Munich. I think I can inform you on these points, but doubt whether you will be able to get the hang of what is going on, and realise that the question at issue is not one of principle but an entirely personal affair. When the King, a year and a half ago, called Wagner to him, the only thing His Majesty had in view, was to provide a homeless man with an asylum where he could rest unmolested and work

peacefully. Wagner frankly told the Sovereign that if he had a quiet house and garden and sufficient means to be relieved of the necessity of working for money, he would be amply satisfied.

"No fuss would have been caused by such a trifle had not personal jealousies come into play and popular opinion been stimulated against the artist by members of the Royal Household, who feared that, unless he were speedily banished from Munich, his remarkable influence over the King would be detrimental to them. This animosity dated from the day on which the King received Semper and ordered him to prepare plans for the construction of a large theatre.

"Now the truth is that it had dawned upon these people that the Sovereign's affection for the great artist was not a fleeting, youthful fancy, which would pass away as others had done before. As soon as they thought that the interests of the Civil List and its administrators were threatened, they started a shameful campaign of lies in the hope of discrediting Wagner with the King, and openly denounced the dangers which attended his Majesty's intimacy with the composer. But these attempts to separate the two friends came to nothing, because the King was determined to give Wagner the repose he needed for the evolution of his work as well as to ensure that his compositions were produced under adequate conditions.

"Unhappily it appeared that the King's modest wishes and hopes could not be fulfilled, unless by a

thorough reform of the actual state of music and the theatre in Bavaria. Wagner understands better than anyone else that his artistic methods can only be developed when the German stage and German art flourish. Therefore every step made in the interest of the latter would lead also to improvement in the former direction. Imagine Wagner's dismay to discover that he, who only wished to forget the world and be left at peace to absorb himself in his work, had to forgo this dream of his whole life until he had changed the existing order of things around him. You cannot know what this meant in such a town as Munich where everything went against his artistic tendencies and was imputed to personal motives and personal interests, and where every step taken was safe to be misinterpreted.

"After pondering for a long time what course he should pursue he decided to write a long report to the King urging him to found a Musical School in Munich. To this scheme there was no open opposition, but secretly a conspiracy was engineered, the object of which was to make Wagner's stay in Munich impossible. He was calumniated constantly and the wildest rumours concerning him and his activity were circulated with the object of frightening the King by showing how hated his friend was. Nay, the Monarch himself was not spared, and his taste for a solitary life, which the indifferent state of his health necessitated, was laid at the door of the malignant Wagner by the aristocracy and the clergy, who professed to be affronted by the

isolation and did their best to excite the most unworthy suspicions against Wagner. Certain people, whose names I need not mention and who at present are despised throughout Bavaria, used every possible means to discredit Wagner and attributed every evil to him. You will easily understand how painful all this is to the great artist who only longs to be left at peace and yet is drawn into the vortex of political intrigue.

"More than once he wished to escape from these persecutions by quitting Munich, but the entreaties of his Royal Patron and the hope that, after all, he might realise his artistic dreams kept him at his post. But he is constrained to the painful conclusion that he must expect nothing but calumny from his enemies, especially from two or three persons who have sworn his ruin and who will not stick at any device to shake the confidence of the King in his disinterestedness. Of one thing you may rest assured, the opposition to whatever Wagner does or says does not proceed from party feeling, and still less from principle, but is caused by the most shameless personal questions and personal interests of a small but powerful clique. I boldly take it upon myself to say, that if only two or three persons, who do not enjoy the smallest confidence with the Bavarians, were sent away, the King and the nation would be delivered once for all from these periodical spells of unpleasantness."

To this letter the organ of the Conservative party,

the *Courier of Bavaria*, replied on the 1st of December with an ironical article. It said among other things, " It is easy to guess who are these two or three persons for whose removal the *Nachrichten* is so anxious. They are the persons who were so scandalously attacked by the *Nürnberger Anzeiger*, namely, the officials of His Majesty's Household and His Majesty's Treasury. Let them be removed to make way for Herr Richard Wagner and allow him a free hand in all his various enterprises. When this has been done then order will be restored and Bavaria shall be happy ! "

These quotations prove how thoroughly Wagner and his Prussian supporters had managed to annoy the King, who had loaded him with presents and made him a favourite. The fact is, all Bavaria was disgusted at the presence of this man at the side of its beloved Sovereign, and a violent outcry spontaneously spread throughout the land against a continuance of the favour he enjoyed. With the exception of the Progressive Press, which he subsidised, hostile critiques appeared daily in all the principal organs in Bavaria, as well as in such satirical papers as *Punch*. The last published the prayer which, it imagined, Wagner used to repeat every morning. This was quoted everywhere and gave the finishing touch to his unpopularity. It is remembered to this day in Munich whenever Wagner's name is mentioned.

" My dear God," so it ran, " keep me in good health ! Let me continue to enjoy my small house, my garden,

and my income, and give me, please, one hundred thousand florins more, if not all at once, at least in instalments! Dear God, bless everybody on this earth, especially those people who have got such a strong tenor voice that they can be of use to me! I pray Thee, grant strength to the weak, consolation to those who mourn, and good health to all who are sick! Only, please, send an apoplectic stroke or some kind of disease to two or three people who do not enjoy any respect in Bavaria, so as to put them out of my way upon this earth, and allow them to enter Eternal Life! Amen."

It soon leaked out that the long letter in the *Neueste Nachrichten*, which had produced such a sensation throughout Bavaria, had been taken to the editor by Frau Cosima von Bülow, who, in her zeal for Wagner's interests, had assumed the responsibility of its publication. The consequence was, that not only did it inflame public discontent against the composer, but brought about exactly the opposite of what its authors wished. It incensed the King himself, who wrote to Wagner about it, on the 2nd of December, from Hohenschwangau.

"This article," said Ludwig, "has embittered the last days of my stay here, and there is no doubt but that it was written by one of your friends, who did not render you a service in publishing it, but on the contrary has considerably harmed you."

With the Sovereign's approval, on the 30th of

November, one of the persons attacked in the *Nachrichten* letter, Herr von Pfistermeister, inserted in the official *Gazette* of Bavaria, a statement which showed plainly enough which would win the day—Wagner or the officials of the Royal Household.

"In number 333 of the *Neueste Nachrichten*," said this communication, "fresh attacks have been made against certain persons in the service of His Majesty. The expressions used in these attacks, and their whole style, render it easy to identify their author or authors. Though the name of the persons attacked is not mentioned, it is certain I am one of them. At present I do not intend to reply to these charges through the medium of the Press, and I shall leave them unchallenged, as I have left former ones, because the means of defence at my disposal are too closely connected with certain personalities to allow of my disclosing them publicly without infringing on that discretion which is part of my official duties. The only thing I can do just now is to allude to the sanctity of the obligations incumbent upon me in virtue of the position I hold. I recognise, however, that a time may come when I shall be compelled to have recourse to other means to defend my good name than retrench myself behind the duties of my post.

"Meanwhile, I must ask the public to notice that, in the aforesaid article in the *Nachrichten*, it is said that the opposition started in certain official circles against Wagner dated from the day when he brought forward

his plans for the construction of a great theatre, the expenses of which would have seriously compromised the interests of the Civil List, and not, as he had tried to make some people believe, from the time when it came to his receiving a few thousand florins more or less, which would not have been of any account whatever, whilst the edifice which he had endeavoured to induce the King to build, would have cost many millions. This one fact alone is my justification, and I shall now quietly await the further developments which this affair may take in the near future."

This statement, which was received with universal satisfaction, decided the fate of Wagner and the consequent collapse of all his vast schemes. He had carried matters too far, and having sown the wind was very soon to reap the whirlwind.

CHAPTER X

BANISHED

ON the 4th of December, 1865, there was circulated for signature in all the large business houses of Munich an address to Herr von Pfistermeister, in which he was assured of the confidence with which he was regarded and expressing the hope that he would not give up the post he held in the Royal Household but stand by His Majesty at all costs. This address was presented by a deputation, and at the same time an official statement of its contents was communicated to the King, who was given clearly to understand how cordially his friend Richard Wagner was disliked throughout Bavaria.

Ludwig returned in haste from his castle in Hohenschwangau to Munich on the very next day, that is, on the 5th of December, and immediately after his arrival, his mother, the Dowager Queen Marie, his great-uncle, Prince Charles, Archbishop Scheer, and the Premier, Herr von der Pfordten, came to represent the necessity of his sending Wagner from Bavaria. This was particularly insisted on by Herr von der Pfordten, who in a memorandum which he handed to the King, threatened to resign if Wagner were not

forthwith ordered to leave the kingdom. One of the reasons he assigned for this counsel was that the population of the capital was so incensed against the composer, that the police could no longer be responsible for his safety. Prince Charles, by reason of his advanced age, could express himself more freely in the royal presence than any other member of the family, and told him energetically that his intimacy with the musician would be disastrous to his future material and moral welfare. Even the servants of the Royal Household protested against the constant presence of Wagner at the Palace, and among the different classes of the community the possibility of revolution was discussed.

Ludwig suffered from nervous prostration and was unable to come to a prompt decision. For some time he resisted the popular movement for the dismissal of his favourite, then suddenly he yielded to the entreaties of his family and Ministers, but not before he had been told that his name was linked with that of the composer in a way that would leave a stain on his fair fame. It is a question, however, whether even this remonstrance would have had the necessary weight had not the deluded King been shown proofs of the intrigue which Wagner had been carrying on with Frau Cosima von Bülow at the very time that he had warned his royal pupil against woman's influence in every shape and form.

This revelation settled the question. The King had

lived for months under the conviction that Wagner's heart belonged to him alone, and that the master whom he revered with such unhealthy fervour shared his feelings and considered him as the only being upon earth worthy of his tenderness. By nature Ludwig was exacting, jealous and passionate. He was wounded to the quick at learning he had been made a fool of, and that the man for whom he had done so much, and whom he had defended under difficulties which no one else could have surmounted, had deceived him, simply laughing at him and making use of him to obtain money for the supply of his luxurious tastes, and had in fact never shared the ideals to which he had professed devotion.

Again, the King, whatever his faults, was not naturally vicious and had been taught to respect the marriage vows. It was repugnant to him to find that Wagner, whom he had considered as perfection upon earth, had not hesitated to defile the home where he had been welcomed as a dear and honoured friend. His first feeling at this discovery was one of intense horror, then of disgust and rage. He wrote at once to his Prime Minister saying that he desired Wagner to leave Munich immediately. Anxious, however, to conceal the true motive for exiling the friend to whom he had been so much attached, he added that he wished to show to his "beloved people that their affection and confidence were worth more to him than aught else in the world."

Baron von Lutz was finally entrusted with the unpleasant task of acquainting Wagner with his fate. That his decision was belated the King had visible and audible evidence in the very cool reception he met with that very evening from the people of Munich at the Royal Theatre, where he appeared with his mother, the Dowager Queen. This was the first time Ludwig had not been hailed with loud "Hochs!" in public and he felt it keenly. But whilst determined to remove the cause of the estrangement between him and his subjects, he nevertheless was genuinely grieved at parting from the man to whom he owed illusions that had transformed his life, and who had carried his imagination into regions where he knew he would never soar again.

In the agony which wrung his soul he wrote to Wagner:

"My very dear Friend,

"In spite of the sorrow I feel, I must ask you to comply with the wishes I have asked my private secretary to convey to you. Believe me, I must do so. My affection for you will never change. And I beg of you to keep me in your friendship also. I can assure you that I am worthy of it. Who can have the right to part us?

"I know very well that you understand me, and feel for me, that you appreciate the full extent of my grief. I repeat it, I could not do otherwise, and I

want you to be convinced of it. Never doubt the sincerity of your best friend. It will never vary or change.

"Until death your faithful

"LUDWIG."

Meanwhile public joy at the departure of Wagner knew no bounds. Before it was officially known that he was about to leave Bavaria, the tidings had spread throughout town and country, and on the 8th of December—although it was a Friday when it did not usually meet—the town council was convoked in an extraordinary session to discuss the sending of a deputation to the King to express the thanks of the capital for the great decision. The debate lasted a long time and was very bitter and even stormy, but at last it was agreed to allow the matter to drop, and public rejoicings were also abandoned out of respect for the Sovereign who, it was notorious, had been most painfully affected by all that had taken place.

Although the Clerical and Conservative parties rejoiced almost immoderately at the turn of events, the Liberal organs attempted to defend the composer dismissed in disgrace from the scene of his former triumph. One of them actually wrote that "the Royal Family, together with representatives of the aristocracy, and members of the clergy and of the Government, had taken it upon themselves to acquaint the King with the popular clamour for the departure

of Wagner from Bavaria, but that they had not been well advised in doing so, because the composer's presence had had nothing to do with the dissatisfaction which prevailed throughout the whole country. The King had been deceived upon that point; the personality of Wagner had not influenced the agitation recently observed among the people."

Wagner, however, did not seem to respond to the regrets expressed by Ludwig II. at this sad close to their intimacy, regrets renewed in another letter, which the King addressed to the composer a few hours before his departure. Wagner's principal care, after he had been told by Baron von Lutz that he must leave, was to take with him the furniture and ornaments of the rooms which he had equipped, regardless of expense, in the house the King had given him in the Brienerstrasse, the description of which suggests a possibly unbalanced mind, for it is difficult to imagine that a man cannot produce a work of art unless he lives in apartments hung with pink and white satin, like the boudoir of a *demi-mondaine.*

After pulling down with his own hands the curtains and draperies he had loved to have about him, Wagner, on the morning of the 10th of December, at the early hour of half-past five o'clock, which had been chosen to avoid any hostile demonstration against his person, started for Vevey, accompanied to the station by Cosima von Bülow and one or two friends, who braved public opinion in order to wish him good-bye and God-speed.

Munich never saw him again, excepting upon one or two fleeting visits, which were always made incognito and about which no one knew anything until they were over.

But the relations between him and the King did not cease with his exile. The latter continued to pay him a liberal annuity and helped him to build his famous theatre at Bayreuth. And upon several memorable occasions, when called upon to take some important decision, Ludwig II. sought advice as to the line of conduct he should adopt from his former master and confidant. Unfortunately for him and unfortunately, too, for Bavaria; because had it not been for Wagner, Bavaria would never have followed Prussia's lead and much in the world's history would have run very differently.

But though his heart remained always more or less attached to Wagner, the King could never bring himself to forgive Frau von Bülow for her relations with the composer and absolutely refused to acknowledge her, even after she had been regularly married to the author of "Tannhäuser." And when, after the latter's death, Cosima asked for the favour of an audience with Ludwig, whom she wished to thank for the proofs of the affection he had constantly given to Wagner, the Sovereign did not accede to her request and declared he would have nothing further to do with "that woman," as he called her.

The expulsion of Wagner from Bavarian territory

produced a radical change in the character of the King. Though he had willingly asked him to go away, even in imperative terms, Ludwig II. could not forgive those who had interfered with his private life. It is from this period one dates his aversion from Munich, where he never sojourned for any length of time after the demonstrations in which its citizens had indulged in respect of his relations with the man whom he persisted in viewing as a being absolutely superior to the rest of humanity. And his forcible separation from this personage, whose influence had pervaded his every action, left him morose, sullen, dissatisfied, without desire for anything, caring only for absolute solitude in which he might nurse regrets he did not care the world to notice, or to hear of.

And from the day on which Wagner was sent into exile, the bright young Sovereign, whom his subjects had loved so fervently, underwent a metamorphosis which became more and more acute as the years went by, bringing along with them their burden of anxieties and sorrows. Ludwig had never been normal, in the usual acceptation of the word, but he might have ruled his kingdom without further remark than that of being eccentric, a thing that would not have seemed strange in a Wittelsbach, considering the antecedents of the family.

Wagner's influence, and especially the manner of living to which he had accustomed the Monarch, transforming night into day and doing many other things

besides just as unwholesome, unhinged Ludwig II., and his relations, who were devoted heart and soul to Prussian interests, were enabled—as we shall duly learn—to dethrone him and put Prince Luitpold in his place. The King was essentially a Bavarian, not a German; this must never be forgotten when passing judgment upon him and his doings. It was to Prussia's advantage to place the kingdom under the rule of a Prince who was willing to put the Empire before his country. That this fatal misfortune became possible was—if we only go back to the beginning of the drama of which the last act took place in the blue waters of the lake of Starnberg—the crime (the word is hardly too strong) of Richard Wagner.

CHAPTER XI

BISMARCK AND BAVARIA

ABOUT the time when Ludwig was embittered by the first pangs of his sorrow at the collapse of his intercourse with Richard Wagner, the political situation in Europe assumed an acute character, owing to the aggressive policy of Prussia, which, under Bismarck's guidance, aspired to the hegemony of Germany. The question of the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein gave it the opportunity it had been looking for, and after the war which that question had caused, it was evident that the situation of the small German States was seriously menaced. Maximilian II., who throughout his life was afraid lest Prussia would annex Bavaria, did his best, whilst keeping outside the struggle with Denmark, to stand up for the interests of the Duke of Augustenburg. But after his death new complications arose which made it plain that the question at issue was whether Prussia or Austria should be supreme in the German Confederation.

Bavaria was bound, by ties of sympathy, to the latter country and, as the largest of the minor States, her attitude was bound to have a marked influence on the course of events. Strenuous efforts were, there-

fore, made both in Vienna and Berlin to secure her co-operation or at least her neutrality. But at Munich the position was necessarily one of expectancy. The Government, nevertheless, felt that though it had good reasons to hope to be allowed to remain outside the conflict, already inevitable, yet it must take precautions in view of eventualities. Therefore a decree for the mobilisation of the Bavarian forces was drawn up and signed by Ludwig at Hohenschwangau on the 10th of May, 1866.

On the 22nd of that month the Prime Minister reported to the Sovereign on the situation. Ludwig listened with apparent attention, and then asked the Premier to walk with him in the Park. He parted from him with great cordiality, begging him to wait until next day, when he should decide what had best be done. But the Minister had hardly left him, when the King mounted a horse and, accompanied by one groom, galloped to the small railway station of Biessenhofen, where he took train for Lindau. Thence he proceeded, unrecognised, to Switzerland and immediately repaired to the Villa Triebschen, near Lucerne, where Wagner had taken up his abode after his expulsion from Munich.

No one had suspected the King's intentions, and when the Minister—who had, meanwhile, prepared the decree calling out the Reserves for active service—came to submit it to Ludwig for signature, the latter had (as we know) flown.

At length it came out that Ludwig II. had taken refuge with the man whom Bavaria had required him to dismiss from his presence. The Premier telegraphed to Wagner that the presence of the King was indispensable in his capital, and that the gravest consequences might follow upon his absence at such a juncture. Ludwig thereupon returned to Lindau, where a royal train met him. His absence had only lasted a few days, but it was viewed with grave reprehension by the public, and the Press commented upon it in no measured tones, asking whether Richard Wagner or the Head of the House of Wittelsbach ruled Bavaria.

On the 27th of May the King opened Parliament in person. In his speech he expressed the hope that his country might avoid hostilities, but the nation sympathised too strongly with Austria for this to be possible, and on the 14th of June a military convention and alliance were concluded between the two States. On the same day Prussia, which saw no reason to go on wearing the mask, sent her ultimatum to Dresden, Hanover, and Cassel, challenging them either to enter into alliance with her, or accept the consequences. She lost no time in putting her threats into execution and, faithful to her usual tactics of surprising her enemies by the swiftness of her movements, crushed her opponents in a few days.

Bavaria had thrown herself into the struggle on the 16th of June. She had undertaken not to conclude a separate peace with Prussia, and we shall see

in a moment how her ally regarded this mutual engagement. The King went for a day to the Headquarters of his army at Bamberg, but the struggle was hopeless from the outset and the Prussian troops swept everything before them. Francis Joseph, anxious solely to save his own skin, signed at Nikolsburg a peace which was shameful to him, and cowardly to his allies, whom he left to their fate with the utmost indifference. Bavaria alone could do nothing, and she followed the Austrian Emperor's example.

To all appearance Prussia was merciful—it suited her book to seem so—and hardly any territorial cessions were exacted of Bavaria, which had only to pay a war contribution of thirty million florins. The campaign lasted only a few weeks, but it destroyed for ever the independence of Bavaria, which was compelled to accept the victor's conditions and organise her army under Prussian guidance and upon the Prussian pattern.

Perhaps another Sovereign than Ludwig might have held his own better than he did in the face of the Berlin policy and its subsequent programme. His father would probably have pursued different tactics from the very first and paid some regard to Bavarian interests and sentiment, whereas there is reason to fear that Wagner's influence had something to do with Ludwig's acquiescence in the terms which Bismarck thought fit to impose. Moreover, the King was, at the time, in a state of complete prostration and unable to see things steadily and see them whole. The course of his after

existence showed that he bitterly repented his attitude at the crisis of his country's fate, but both Bavaria and the King had now to dree their weird.

It is, nevertheless, singular that Ludwig's popularity did not suffer from the campaign which had proved so disastrous to the Bavarian arms. During the only journey he made throughout his State immediately after the war, he was received everywhere with the greatest enthusiasm, amid manifestations of sympathy such as he had never expected. The traditional affection which since immemorial times had existed in Bavaria for the House of Wittelsbach, was still intense, and the young Monarch was welcomed with warmth and joy. In Nuremberg, especially, the inhabitants grew wild when it saw him, and no hero ever was greeted with a sincerer ovation than that which hailed him when he first set foot in the picturesque old city, beflagged in his honour. He was touched by this unlooked-for cordiality, appeared in his best mood, and put aside the shyness and disrelish for the society of his fellows to which he had recently been more and more disposed. At a ball held by the town he danced several times and seemed eager to produce a good impression. During the journey, too, he distributed immense sums in charity and never refused any request. He gave the rein to the extravagance to which he was naturally inclined, but no one attempted to check his generosity, because his Ministers felt that his demeanour and conduct would go far to correct or modify the

prevailing opinions that it was only to Wagner he chose to be munificent.

Before he left Nuremberg Ludwig promised the Burgomaster that he would soon return, and expressed his pleasure and gratitude at the splendid reception given him in the ancient stronghold of his race. But the promise was never kept; and this was the first and last journey the King ever took throughout his dominions. As soon as he was back at Hohenschwangau, which he preferred to his other residences, he resumed his old habits of solitude and became more disinclined than ever to mingle with other people.

His mother was anxious he should marry and would have given much to see a young Queen at the Munich Residenz, as the Royal Palace was called. Efforts to induce him to enter the holy state of matrimony were repeatedly made both by his family and his Ministers. Once (as already mentioned) it seemed as if he might propose to the Grand Duchess Marie of Russia, but though attracted by her charm of manner he did not utter the decisive words. A wife would have been his salvation. It is unthinkable that the eccentricities, which were daily becoming more apparent in his character, would then have taken root at all. What Ludwig needed, and what he really never had throughout his life, was a congenial companion to share his thoughts and occupations, and to associate herself with his pursuits and artistic and literary tastes.

His mother was a good woman, but gifted with the

smallest amount of brain power. She did not understand her son's disposition and idiosyncrasies, and continually jarred upon his nerves by her matter-of-fact way of repressing his enthusiasm whenever his imagination was touched or his poetic instincts were roused. He was attached to her and never omitted to treat her with the utmost respect, even when he did not agree with her opinions. He had tried to interest her in the inner life in which he found so much solace but which he did not like to mention openly before everybody, but the Queen discouraged all such attempts. For instance, if he desired her judgment on a book that had appealed to him she would foolishly reply, that "she did not care for books and could not understand how one could spend one's time in reading them." Instead of attributing her words to ignorance and lack of appreciation of the subjects which were dear to him, Ludwig used to take them as an indirect rebuff and feel hurt to think that his mother and himself were so different in their opinions and habits of thought, and this angered him against her and made him miserable.

To those ignorant of Ludwig's temperament it must have appeared the easiest thing in the world to find a Consort for him. He was an eligible *parti*—barely twenty-two, handsome, pleasant, clever. His eccentricities were not yet pronounced enough to destroy the halo of romance which had surrounded him ever since the first day of his accession. Even the Wagner episode had not harmed him as much as it might have

done in other circumstances, because the affection which his subjects cherished for him led them to regard it as a mistake of youth. Hence the ardour of their zeal in insisting on Wagner's dismissal. Such were the depth and sincerity of their attachment, they wished the young Monarch to be placed beyond reach of a contamination which was bound to be calamitous alike to himself and his kingdom.

Yet every proposal of marriage that was put before the King, or mentioned to him, he rejected or set aside until a future day—which never came. The nation wanted a Queen, but at the same time had a hankering for the princess of a foreign family who should not only be handsomely dowered but bring with her the alliance and sympathies of a powerful State, capable of upholding and standing by Bavaria in the event of the ever-dreaded Prussian invasion. The King's marriage was as much a political question as a private one, and it was no wonder that the Bavarians wished it to be settled in accordance with their national interests. But the days went by and Ludwig gave no sign that he was willing to comply with the desires of his people and family. But one morning the news began to circulate that he had asked his cousin, the Duchess Sophie Charlotte, to become his wife and to accept at his hands the crown of the Wittelsbachs.

CHAPTER XII

A BREACH OF PROMISE

SOPHIE CHARLOTTE was the youngest daughter of Duke Maximilian in Bavaria, the Head of a younger branch of the Royal Family, and sister of the Empress Elizabeth of Austria and the Queen of Naples. She was beautiful, talented and accomplished, and as passionate a lover of music as the King. He was drawn to her at first because of this similarity in their tastes and because they shared many points in common, had the same love of solitude, and the same distaste for the worldly pleasures generally sought after by people of their age. Whether passion had much to do with the engagement, or whether it was a sudden infatuation of Ludwig's, has never been ascertained. Certain it is that he appeared to be very much in love with his cousin, whilst she accepted her lot with seeming resignation and a sense of flattered vanity.

Her mother, the Duchess Louise, a Bavarian Princess, sister of the late King Maximilian, was a strong-minded, energetic woman whose word was law in her household, and whose children durst not oppose any pet project. She had married her daughters brilliantly, and the prospect of seeing her youngest become the

Queen of her native country appealed to her family pride and at the same time touched her heart, since there would be no occasion to part from this beloved child.

When told that her cousin wished her for his wife, Sophie Charlotte never entertained the thought of refusing his offer, but those who saw her at the time say that she evinced no enthusiasm about it and that she lost much of her bright and joyful disposition after the proclamation of the betrothal. This was publicly announced on the 22nd of January, 1867, during a representation at the Court Theatre of Munich, when the Queen Dowager and the King went to fetch the Duchess from the box where she sat with her parents, and bring her to the royal box, where they placed her between them. Four days later a message from the King acquainted the Chambers with his intention of marrying his cousin. Immediately an address of congratulation to the betrothed pair was voted, but though a deputation was nominated to present it, the King refused to receive it officially and merely expressed his thanks during a Court Ball a few days later.

Munich was genuinely glad at the Sovereign's engagement. It rushed at once to the conclusion that it was a love match, and rejoiced to think that a Bavarian Princess whom it had known ever since her baby days was to become its Queen. The Duchess was enthusiastically greeted whenever she showed herself in public, and great preparations were made for

the wedding, which was fixed to take place on the 12th of October, 1867. Apartments were arranged in the Residenz for the future Queen, and her household was appointed, whilst she received the most splendid presents from the King, who, during the whole of the summer, visited her daily at the Castle of Possenhofen, where Duke Maximilian and his family resided.

After a few months Ludwig's enthusiasm abated and he began to be affected with fits of despondency, during which he used to express his regret that his future wife did not enter into his tastes and pursuits so thoroughly as he had hoped. He had believed she would prove the comrade his restless soul longed for, but the high-spirited girl did not respond to his appeals and, instead of unreservedly accepting all he told her about his friendship with Wagner, spoke of the matter in terms which roused the King's indignation and anger. The Duchess was of a very hasty disposition and subject to bursts of temper she did not always choose to control. Her mind did not wholly grasp the vagaries of her fiancé, of whom, indeed, she was rather frightened. Proud she was, like all the Wittelsbachs, and the idea of becoming Queen had attracted her, but it was the Crown she cared for rather than the man from whom she was to receive it. The affection she might have been supposed to entertain for him diminished instead of growing as the time passed and she got to know him better, or thought she did. In all likelihood she never fathomed the depths of a nature which hardly

ever revealed its secrets, and which held itself aloof from the cares and worries of everyday life, whilst taking to heart every slight, real or imaginary, passed upon it.

Ludwig was extremely mistrustful and could be very nasty when he thought he was not first in the affections of those he loved. This was the case when he discovered Wagner's intrigue with Cosima von Bülow, and something of the kind marred the pleasure he had experienced when he became engaged to his cousin, who, he discovered, cared for many things in life besides himself, and could even exist apart from him, though he counted the minutes when separated from her and was restless whenever she was out of his sight. His jealousy was almost painful, and it is small wonder the young girl felt rather alarmed when she reflected upon the question of her future happiness with a man who had a fatal facility for seeing grievances where none existed or manufacturing them when necessary.

Besides, Ludwig's whole conduct was of a sort to arouse the anxieties of any woman. He used sometimes to send Sophie presents at midnight and feel affronted if she did not rise from her bed to write her thanks to him at once; or if, by chance, she forgot to do anything he had asked of her, he lost his temper and for days together was as disagreeable and unpleasant as he could be. Fascinated by her remarkable beauty, he had probably imagined she possessed equal

beauty of mind. That this was not so was the poor creature's misfortune, not her fault. Ludwig had more affinity with an elder sister of the Duchess, the Empress Elizabeth of Austria.

Moreover, he began to be upset about the state of his health. He became, or said he had become, subject to nervous headaches, during which he used to lock himself up in his room, and spend long hours alone and absorbed in thoughts the nature of which none could guess. A journey which he undertook to Paris, on the pretext of visiting the Great Exhibition, brought no relief to his troubled spirits. Still nothing occurred to suggest the possibility of rupture with his cousin. In August of that year (1867) Napoleon III. and the Empress Eugénie stopped at Augsburg on their way to Salzburg, to visit the Emperor and Empress of Austria. The King of Bavaria met them there and accompanied them to Munich, where they made a short stay and where they were received by the Queen Dowager, along with the Duchess Sophie Charlotte, whom Ludwig introduced to his guests as his future wife. But at that very moment he was preparing to sever the link which bound him to her and thinking how he could best manage it without too great a scandal.

It has been asserted that the King's chief reason for breaking his engagement was that he had discovered his cousin cared for someone else; but this is hardly likely, if one remembers the exemplary life which the future Duchess of Alençon led throughout

her earthly career, and the strictness of her upbringing. Others pretend that Ludwig had ascertained she was of a violent disposition and that he feared she would not willingly assent to the kind of existence he wished her to lead. However these things may be, it is certain that the Monarch, who seemed to be so passionately attached to Sophie Charlotte, became so dismayed at the thought of marrying her that, a few days before the wedding, he wrote to Prince Hohenlohe, telling him, brusquely and briefly, that he was unable to fulfil his engagement with the Duchess, and requesting him to arrange matters to the general satisfaction.

Prince Hohenlohe was aghast and tried to remonstrate; but when he asked the King for an interview to discuss the situation, he found that Ludwig had suddenly left Munich for the Bavarian Alps and given orders that he was not to be disturbed by correspondence. Hohenlohe was an accomplished diplomat, but even he found it a hard task to explain the wanton insult which his royal master had given to his relatives. He thought it wisest to discuss the situation quite frankly with Duke Maximilian, and one may imagine the old man's consternation when he learned the truth. It was decided that the best thing to do was to announce that the state of the King's health had obliged him to postpone his marriage *sine die.* This would afford the Duke an opportunity later of saying that in the circumstances, he deemed it desirable to cancel the betrothal of his daughter. This communication,

according to the words used in the official newspapers, "was received by His Majesty with deep regret," and so the whole affair came to an end.

Unhappily, every kind of calumny was poured on the head of the innocent Sophie Charlotte, whom the public persisted in regarding as the guilty party in this discreditable incident. Stories without the slightest foundation in fact were freely related all over Bavaria—stories which it was the King's duty to have contradicted, but which, on the contrary, he allowed to circulate, perhaps because his conscience smote him for his heartless behaviour to a young girl whose only fault was obedience to her parent's wishes in becoming engaged to an unworthy man.

Ludwig never regained his serenity after this breach of his promise, and the sadness and despondency which had oppressed him since his separation from Wagner assumed every day a more sombre character. He must sometimes have regretted his conduct, however, because he carefully avoided meeting the woman whom he had so deeply wronged, except on one occasion when he went to wish her joy on the day of her marriage to another man—much to the annoyance and amazement of Duke Maximilian and his family.

Whatever Sophie Charlotte may have felt, she showed no signs of sorrow at the loss of the Crown which, at one time, she may have hoped to wear. About a year after the breaking off of her unlucky betrothal with Ludwig II. she met the young Duke of Alençon,

son of the Duke de Nemours, and was married to him in the private chapel of the castle of Possenhofen. She afterwards left Bavaria for England and France, and ended her days in a most terrible manner in 1897 in the fire of the Bazaar de la Charité in Paris. When this catastrophe occurred, Ludwig II. had been dead for some years, having also perished in circumstances hardly less tragical than those in which his cousin lost her life. Both seem to have been pursued by the traditional ill-luck of the Wittelsbachs, and both were victims of the hereditary disease which has been the curse of that race; because there was a time when the Duchess of Alençon showed symptoms of dementia, and she shared to some extent the singularities of the cousin to whom she had been contracted in marriage.

After the rupture of his engagement the King did not make further attempts to quit his state of bachelorhood, and his people grew accustomed to the fact that he would never give them a Queen. Women in general no more exercised any influence over his life, which became more and more that of a recluse. Though he might have had plenty of love affairs, he reserved his affections for art, and art alone, spending his days in contemplation of ideals which, unfortunately for him, were to involve him in imprudences that culminated in the ruin of all he had cherished or respected in the world. Would marriage have averted these calamities? Who knows? perhaps it might have accelerated them!

CHAPTER XIII

HOHENLOHE IN POWER

LUDWIG II.'s betrothal has led me far from the discussion of Bavarian politics after the war of 1866. These had been carefully watched in Berlin, and Bismarck especially followed their course with unflagging interest. He fully appreciated the importance of securing Bavaria's adhesion to Prussian aspirations and ambitions, and his plans nearly collapsed when the Bavarian Government hesitated to conclude peace on his conditions. Doubtless the knowledge that he could not tackle the question of the restoration of the German Empire for the profit of the Hohenzollern dynasty without the acquiescence of Southern Germany, made him lenient towards the minor States whose co-operation was so essential to him. This explains why he did not press conditions that might have proved intolerable to Bavarian pride, but notwithstanding his apparent generosity, scarcely a soul in the country but resented the Prussianisation of Bavaria.

However, the great Minister who guided for so many years the destinies of the Fatherland had no scruples: the word was not in his vocabulary. He played upon

the peculiarities of the young King, and knowing very well that he could be easily stirred to anger and even wrath, made a confidential communication to his Foreign Minister to the effect that Napoleon III., after the battle of Sadowa, had offered his mediation to the belligerents and asked a large slice of Bavarian territory as compensation or reward.

There was not a word of truth in this story, but it served. It was told to Ludwig at a moment when he was irritated by things in general, and it excited him to such an extent that he yielded to the entreaties of the German Imperialist party in Munich, and also to the advice of Wagner (whom " powerful " arguments had readily induced to support Bismarck), and decided to conclude a defensive and offensive treaty with Prussia. A few days after it had been ratified by both parties, Ludwig sent to King William I. an autograph letter in which he mentioned, among other things, his pleasure that " a real and lasting friendship had at last been established between their Houses and States."

Somehow the purport of this message got wind in Munich and provoked widespread indignation. Bavaria was smarting from the wounds she had received during the campaign, the humiliations of which still rankled, and she could not forgive the King for holding out his hand to the foe who had vanquished him only a few months before. Ludwig soon discovered there was something amiss, for when he opened the Legislative Chambers in person in that eventful autumn of 1866,

he was received in silence or with manifest disapproval by the people of Munich. This was a novel experience and he resented it bitterly. But instead of its acting as a deterrent and soberer, this demonstration (arranged by the Clerical and Nationalist parties) only enraged the young King, and confirmed him in his resolve to look to Prussia in future, and not to listen to the advice of those who had rightly gauged the situation, and knew that Bavaria was on the road to ruin, and that the end of her everlasting concessions to Prussia would be the loss of the last vestiges of such independence as had still been left to her.

Later Ludwig recognised his fatal error, but he could not then draw back, the more so that he was confronted by the ambition of his uncle, who, owing to the incurable illness of the King's only brother, Prince Otto, was the next heir to the Throne, and who had not the decency to wait in patience for the day when it should become legally his own.

Moreover, the Queen Mother, by birth a Prussian Princess, diligently encouraged her son to come to an understanding with her family and country. She was not a wise woman (as we have already seen) and her relations with the King were never tender, though he always treated her with profound respect, and she was hardly ever consulted by him on serious subjects. But, nevertheless, she had some kind of influence over him, and he listened to her whenever her advice jumped with his own ideas or impressions. She succeeded in

imbuing him with her opinions on the complicated question of a Prussian alliance and, along with other people (among whom Wagner was, as always, prominent), persuaded him that it would be detrimental to Bavarian interests if he ventured upon a policy of opposition to Berlin.

Bismarck, who knew better than any man alive where to find docile instruments to execute his orders, threw into the King's way at this, the psychological moment, one of the ablest statesmen in Germany, Prince Chlodwig Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst (1819–1901), one of the great landowners in Bavaria, who had latterly been a supporter of Prussian policy and whose high position, unsullied honour and reputation, had won a personal authority, such as few of his contemporaries enjoyed. Prince Hohenlohe, one of the few personal friends of Bismarck (whom he was one day to succeed as Chancellor of the German Empire), was encouraged to make longer sojourns in Munich than he had been wont to do, and contrived to win the confidence of the King, who became persuaded that he was the only man capable of carrying out the policy he had decided upon following, and who appointed him at last Premier of the new Ministry he had called into office by virtue of the royal prerogative.

This choice met with violent opposition from the people as well as in Court circles. The clergy dreaded the very liberal opinions attributed to Prince Hohenlohe; the aristocracy could not forget he was a Prussian

and not a Bavarian; and the Royal Family, with the old exiled King Ludwig I., protested against his being given the direction of Bavarian politics, considering him as the tool of hateful and hated Prussia. Feeling ran so high that the Prince was only styled "the Prussian" and under this designation was spoken of everywhere.

At that time the distrust for everything which hailed from Berlin was so rooted that it required real energy to combat the popular sentiment on the subject of Prussian politics. Prince Hohenlohe was not credited with this quality when, at the instance of Ludwig II. (and Bismarck) he assumed the direction of affairs in Bavaria. But he surprised everybody by the firmness with which he set to work and the determination of his open avowals touching his future policy. Many persons, the King amongst them, thought it was imprudent to acknowledge so soon that an alliance had been concluded with Prussia, but the Prince took the bull by the horns, and boldly declared in the Chambers (August, 1867) that, on behalf of the Bavarian Government, he had signed a military convention with the King of Prussia. The consternation provoked by his words can hardly be described, and the bitterness they created throughout the country was intense. One member of the Lower Chamber went so far as to say that the Prince wanted to make Bavaria the slave of the Hohenzollern dynasty, while another brought to the House a shell he had picked up on the battlefield

of Sadowa, exclaiming as he exhibited it to his colleagues : " Look here ! This is the hand which Prussia is offering to us ! "

Hohenlohe remained unmoved and went on with his task of transforming Bavaria into the humble servant of Bismarck. He started at once to reform the Army and drill it according to Prussian methods. Then he presented to the Chambers a Bill to make schools independent of the control of the Church, and at last he appeared as the resolute adversary of the dogma of Papal Infallibility. This course of action incensed the Clerical and Conservative party against him most violently. During the summer of 1868 discussions of an almost rabid character took place among the different political parties in Bavaria, and the hatred of Prussia assumed such proportions that an alliance was concluded between the Ultramontanes, the Particularists, and the National Liberals, who combined to fight the Government *à outrance.*

However, the King stood by his Ministers, supporting Prince Hohenlohe with such a firm hand that the Cabinet maintained itself in office until 1869, when the elections gave such an overwhelming majority to the Ultramontanes that the Ministry was compelled to resign. But the King refused to accept their resignation and to part with Prince Hohenlohe, for whom he had formed one of the violent friendships to which he was liable, and who, encouraged thereto by Prince Bismarck, consented to remain at the head of the

administration of the country. The majority in the Lower House, thereupon, decided to move a vote of no confidence in the Hohenlohe Ministry. The King threw himself into the fray with the headstrong violence of his temperament, and wished the Upper House to reject the motion. He sent one of the gentlemen of his Household to the different members of the Royal Family who were by right of birth members of that Assembly, asking them not to vote against the Cabinet; and he personally begged his brother Prince Otto not to disregard his wishes. The Princes were present when the motion was discussed, but with the exception of the King's cousin, the Duke Charles Theodore, they all voted with the majority, even Prince Otto doing likewise and publicly proclaiming his opposition to the Hohenlohe *régime.*

Ludwig was furious especially with his brother. Having learned that his uncle, Prince Luitpold, had prevailed upon Otto to ignore his (the King's) wishes, he forbade Luitpold the Court, thus sowing the first seeds of the hatred with which the future Regent of Bavaria was to pursue him later.

Hohenlohe retained his post, but the agitation which his policy had aroused did not abate, and the bitterness of the country against him increased every day, until the beginning of 1870. Then it reached its climax after the Prince had declared in the Lower House that he was of opinion that a State of secondary importance like Bavaria could only exist if it allied

itself to another and more powerful one, and that in the present case it was only to Prussia it could look up, or under whose direction it could undertake a war should it ever find itself compelled to resort to hostilities.

This remark was, as might be expected, the cause of a scene the like of which had never yet been witnessed in the House, and the Press commented upon it in the strongest terms. The Clerical organ, *The Vaterland*, declared that Hohenlohe must resign, because he was interfering between the King and his subjects and was the evil genius of Bavaria, adding that " it was incredible the whole country should be thrown into the turmoil of a new election because of one Hohenlohe. They rely, perhaps," it added, " on the support of Prussia, counting upon the outbreak of riots which would give Prussian troops a pretext for occupying our land. But let them beware; should they ever attempt to cross our frontiers, they would be confronted by six hundred thousand Frenchmen and four hundred thousand Austrians. Bavaria must remain independent and means to do so."

In Vienna and in Rome it was common talk that the King's mind was affected, and the *Unita Cattolica*, the organ of the Vatican, openly blamed him for embarking upon a policy inimical to the interests of his country, and warned him that he was playing a dangerous game fraught with disaster. The agitation excited by Hohenlohe's utterances assumed at last such proportions that the Prince recognised his position

had become unbearable, impossible from every point of view. Not one party in the land, with the exception of the small group that worked in Prussian interests, consented to support him or to adhere to his policy of Prussianisation, and in the beginning of February, 1870, he resigned office, this time definitely, refusing to accede to the King's request that he should remain until the crisis was past. But though he went, his administration bore its natural fruit.

CHAPTER XIV

A MOMENTOUS INTERVIEW

BISMARCK had every reason to be satisfied with Hohenlohe's work. In him he had found an auxiliary of supreme ability, such as he could hardly have hoped for, convinced though he had been of his ability. When Hohenlohe was compelled to relinquish his functions, he had not lost his influence over the mind of the King, but, on the contrary, retained it so completely that long after he retired into private life the Sovereign continued to seek his advice as that of a friend in whom he reposed the most absolute confidence.

Hohenlohe was not only the representative of the Prussian party at the Court of Munich, but also its most capable agent, and perhaps the one man in Germany who had been entirely initiated into the secret designs of the Iron Chancellor. Without his efforts, and especially without the courage with which he carried out his programme of reorganising the Bavarian Army and the Bavarian State according to the Prussian system, it is doubtful whether Southern Germany, which followed more or less the lead of Munich, would have sacrificed as much as she did to the ambitions of

the Hohenzollerns, whom she hated even when she obeyed their wishes and accepted their decisions. We shall see presently what efforts were made by the party of which Prince Hohenlohe was the heart and soul, to induce the Bavarian people to march alongside of the Prussians, against that France with whom they had so much sympathy, and with whom they were united by the ties of a common religion.

Had he been alone it is probable that Ludwig II. would never have opposed the wishes of his subjects, with whom his own sympathies were in accord; but his impressionable mind had been prejudiced against those who, out of true and disinterested patriotism, had placed their country above party and whose point of view he recognised as right when it was too late. Bismarck and Hohenlohe perfectly understood the weak side of his complicated character, and knew how to appeal to his autocratic bent, by satisfying him that the antagonism offered to the policy of his Prime Minister had been directed not against the latter, but against his own authority and prerogative as an absolute Sovereign.

Bismarck went even better, for he contrived a personal interview with the King in which he used all his cunning to prevail upon Ludwig to see that Prussia was Bavaria's best friend, and that, in case of a revival of the German Empire, it would be a question whether a Hohenzollern or a Wittelsbach should be called upon to wear its crown. The young King was proud and

had an immense idea of his own importance; it is not surprising, therefore, that he entered with alacrity into the details of a plan of which he was only shown the broad outlines, but with which he was urged to comply by two of the most eminent diplomatists in the world. He was asked to buy a pig in a poke—and bought it.

This interview—which we must discuss at some length—between the Bavarian Sovereign and the powerful Minister whose fame was already rivalling that of Cavour, is one of the many curious incidents in the curious intrigue which culminated in the proclamation of the King of Prussia as German Emperor at Versailles. Bismarck, whilst anxious to show Ludwig as much of his hand as he deemed necessary for his purpose, yet did not wish the news of his " conversation " to become public property at a time when the Bavarian Government was being vigorously attacked for its Prussian tendencies and sympathies. He knew—none better—that a life-or-death struggle between France and Germany was within measurable distance and that the intervention of Bavaria might turn the scales in favour of the side she joined.

It is true that an alliance existed between her and Prussia; but Bismarck thoroughly understood that an alliance, no matter how strong it might appear, is valueless if contracted against the wishes of the people in whose name it has been concluded. Prussia was hated all over Southern Germany, and the dislike she

begot was so deep-rooted that nothing short of the authority of a King, determined to hold to his engagements, could make her join in an aggression against France. Ludwig, therefore, must be constrained to assent to a whole-hearted understanding between his Government and the Foreign Office over which the Iron Chancellor presided; but this must be managed so discreetly that the Press should not have an inkling of it. Accordingly he requested Prince Hohenlohe to arrange a secret interview between him and the Bavarian Sovereign.

Count von Holnstein, Master of the Horse at the Bavarian Court, was a man of talent, intelligence, and immense ambition, devoted to Prussian interests, to which he remained attached throughout his public career. Of adroit address, he had contrived to insinuate himself into the affections of the King, who since Wagner's exile had felt himself forsaken and in want of sympathy. Holnstein loved no one and cared for nothing beyond his own advantage. He played (as we shall find) a most curious part in the events which led to Ludwig's confinement in the castle of Berg and his untimely death, and it was said of him that, during all the years he held positions of trust in Munich, he was never known to forget an injury or to remember a service. He aspired to become Prime Minister in his turn, and this partly explains why he remained at the beck and call of Prince Hohenlohe, to whom he had made himself indispensable.

When privately consulted about the possibility of arranging a secret interview between the King and Bismarck, he at once offered to facilitate it. It was settled that the Chancellor should come to Munich for the purpose of presenting his respects to Ludwig, but their meeting would bear an entirely promiscuous character. Count Holnstein invited Bismarck to tea at his house, where the King came as if on a casual visit to his Master of the Horse, and at once plunged into a conversation with the great Minister. After a talk of more than three hours they both declared themselves thoroughly satisfied, although they never allowed the slightest mention in the Press or otherwise that they had met.

Doubtless the Chancellor touched upon that Imperial question which he had so much at heart, and which had already been agitated, because it is an error to suppose that it cropped up as a consequence of the Franco-German War—*post hoc, ergo propter hoc.* Long before hostilities began, Prussia had sounded her neighbours as to the substitution of a Hohenzollern for a Habsburg as Emperor of United Germany; but neither the King of Würtemberg—who, out of deference to the Emperor of Russia, whose sister he had wedded, had been first approached—nor the Tsar Alexander II., notwithstanding his affection for everything German, was favourable to the idea, while the Saxon Court, when it heard that such a thing was in contemplation, expressed itself definitely against it.

Bavaria, however, could it be led to favour the reversal of the traditional practice which had existed in Germany for centuries, might favour Prussian aspirations and gain over to her point of view most of the Southern States. The only serious obstacle was the personal ambition of Ludwig II., who, whilst friendly to the re-establishment of the Imperial dignity, might resent its not being offered to him in preference to the King of Prussia. This contingency had to be discussed before coming to any decision on the major question. It is inferred that Bismarck returned from Munich perfectly content, for with wonted energy and determination he pressed forward the plan he had conceived ever since he had undertaken the direction of Prussian politics.

Ludwig, on his part, had chosen to ignore the differences he had had with Prince Hohenlohe's extra-Bavarian policy. When he opened the Bavarian Chambers on the 17th of January, 1870, he spoke of the arrangements he had concluded with Prussia in these terms: "The country is already informed of the nature and details of the convention I have entered into with Prussia. Faithful to the promises that have been ratified by my Royal Word, I shall, when duty calls upon me to do so, stand forth for the honour of Germany, which is also that of Bavaria, should necessity arise."

This sentence proves that though Prince Hohenlohe was out of office he was still in power. For his suc-

cessor, Count Bray, formerly Minister at Vienna, shared entirely his opinions and successfully followed the system of the surrender of Bavarian independence into the hands of Prussia. Indeed, in spite of the agitation which had shaken the Kingdom during the last months of Hohenlohe's administration, public opinion in Bavaria grew far more considerate to Count Bray than it had ever been to his predecessor, and, if the events of 1870 had not taken place, might even have reconciled itself to the German policy which, with the King's consent, had been inaugurated in regard to Prussia.

But the Franco-German War, which broke out in the summer of that year, changed the course of events and shifted people's points of view. The Empire that had been dreamt of by Bismarck and so many other enterprising Germans became an accomplished fact, much to the surprise of multitudes who had never believed it possible for Prussia to reach the summit of her ambition. Among these was Ludwig II., who saw too late that he had been duped; that he had actually assisted to build up the glory of a race he had always disliked and through whom, at last, he lost his crown. Unfortunately for the Monarch, his own friends, his own flesh and blood, turned against him; and his uncle, old Prince Luitpold, who had never forgiven him for making him feel his authority as a Sovereign, was the first to side with Prussia. It was the coming King, the man who had led the opposition to Prince Hohenlohe on account of the latter's Prussian sympathies,

who fought his nephew, the reigning King, when he attempted to escape from the toils in which his own folly and arrogance had enmeshed him and to restore to Bavaria its lost independence.

At present Bavaria has fallen completely under Prussian rule and influence. This is the more singular since, by a curious anomaly, the people are as anti-Prussian as ever. It is the aristocracy, and especially the Royal Family, that are the partisans, whether consciously so or not, of abject submission to Prussia in the person of the Emperor William II. The Wittelsbachs—formerly so proud they would hardly ever accept a foreign Order or decoration, but contented themselves with their own red ribbon of St. Hubert—have so far degenerated that they consider themselves honoured when the Kaiser confers upon them the Iron Cross.

CHAPTER XV

THE HOHENZOLLERN GRIP

BEFORE discussing the events that made the year 1870 so memorable, it will not be amiss to glance at the position of Germany in general and of Southern Germany in particular, on the eve of the struggle out of which the present German Empire rose into being.

It is usually believed that the war of 1866, which saw the reduction of Austria as the preponderant partner in the Germanic Confederation, effected a close union between the different German States and Prussia, whose hegemony they were willing to accept. In reality nothing of the kind had occurred. Prussia, with customary ruthlessness, put her foot down on the neighbours whom she had compelled to submit to her whims and wishes, owing to the array of fallacious arguments she had adduced with equal ability and unscrupulousness.

Had Austria held out a little longer at Sadowa matters might have been considerably improved in her favour. The Prussian armies were more or less exhausted and the war itself was unpopular, a fact which no one abroad seemed to know, and of which few people even in Prussia were conscious, but of which

Bismarck was perfectly aware. The whole campaign had been one of bluff, to which more than to anything else its brilliant success was almost wholly due. The great Minister, who had staked his whole on that one card and whose will made all the puppets around him dance, had no illusions either as to the consequences or the causes of the conflagration he had kindled. He was perhaps the only man in Germany who knew whither all the complications he had brought about tended, and was bent upon carrying the struggle to the bitter end until he had made the Fatherland the foremost power in Europe.

This reminds me of a conversation between the Chancellor and one of his intimates who, presuming on the close relations that had existed between them since boyhood, ventured one day to hint that, after all, the war of 1866 was not the just affair which it had been represented to be to Prussians, and to Prussian children especially; and that Austria and Austrian statesmen were not altogether wrong when they had styled it unwarranted aggression. Bismarck listened in silence and then exclaimed: "You are right, the war was one of the most unjust things ever committed under the sun. It is only our good King who thinks we were justified in what we did."

Beneath its sarcasm this remark contained much truth. It is certain that had King William not been hypnotised into the belief that he was in the right, he would never have consented to an adventure which he

only sanctioned because he had been told that Prussia and her honour had been insolently assailed by Austria. William I. was a fine character in his way. He was not a man of remarkable intelligence, which perhaps was the reason why his reign turned out to be such a great one, and why, personally, he accomplished so many great things. But he was the soul of honour and would have recoiled with horror from any act of meanness. The secret of Bismarck's success consisted in his gift for making the King believe what he wanted him to believe. William I. never saw through his Minister's tricks. He thought him as honest as himself, and whenever they were at difference upon any point, it was always a painful surprise to the old Sovereign.

On the other hand, William I., when worked up to a certain point, could show himself more obstinate and more rapacious than his Chancellor. When, at Nikolsburg, Bismarck urged him to conclude peace before the triumphant Prussians reached Vienna, the Monarch was incensed at him for daring to propose such a thing. Indeed, it was only by threatening to resign that Bismarck induced him to acquiesce in his views. And even then, it is doubtful whether he would have succeeded but for the assistance of the Crown Prince, afterwards the Emperor Frederick III., who, when consulted by his father, told him, to his annoyance and grief, that he thought it would be better for the future peace and prosperity of Prussia if she did not push her victories too far, but halted in time to be able

to transform the enemies of the present into the friends and allies of the morrow. The old King did not grasp the truth of this reasoning and felt genuinely aggrieved at not being allowed to reap what he considered the legitimate fruits of his labours and victories. He would have liked to humiliate Austria to the utmost and to annex Saxony, as he had annexed Hanover.

Looking back on all the circumstances of the case, and especially on the events which followed Sadowa, one cannot help thinking that William I., with sound, common sense, had read the position more accurately than had Bismarck with all his genius. Had the Prussian Sovereign been permitted to carry through his own plans, the alliance with Austria—the result of which has been the present war and will be the overthrow of the Hohenzollern dynasty—would not have been concluded. Clever though he was, Bismarck was completely at fault in his diagnosis of a situation of which he only saw the immediate consequences and did not anticipate the complications of the future and its potentialities for mischief.

But, mistaken though the Minister may have been about the best policy for his country, he did not err in his appreciation of the difficulties under which Prussia would labour in respect of her relations with the minor German States over which the treaty of Nikolsburg gave her the supremacy. He did not deceive himself as to the feeling in Southern Germany, and especially in Bavaria, in regard to Prussia. He knew the detesta-

tion of the Prussian conqueror would never be allayed, not even in the course of time. The character of the two peoples was absolutely antipathetic, and, as I have already remarked, the Prussian was viewed with undisguised hatred in Munich, Stuttgart, Carlsruhe, and the capitals of the small States which had kept their individuality but lost their independence after the war of 1866.

Bismarck did his very best to reconcile the people of the different kingdoms, duchies, and principalities to the altered condition of things, but he failed signally in the attempt. The utmost he achieved was the half-hearted assent of their statesmen and politicians, that it would be to their personal advantage to make common cause with him and his country. He laboured hard to make them think the new Empire was only the old Fatherland writ large. And he partially succeeded because he gave private ambitions time to develop and personal ends plenty of rope, but though he corrupted a few persons he never convinced the nations. The Southern German remained in a state of permanent hostility to his brother of the North, a sentiment which nothing ever changed and which made him a dubious ally.

As a rule, Bismarck despised any manifestation of popular opinion. He believed in conquering individuals and in subduing nations; but at the same time he understood that nations can never be subdued unless individuals are first conquered. Acting in accordance

with this principle, he devoted his energies to the task of drawing Bavaria into the nets of Prussian policy, and he must have trembled more than once to think that any caprice on the part of Ludwig II. might change the whole current of events and endanger the darling project of his life.

During the years which elapsed after the accession of Ludwig II. to the day of his tragic death, Bismarck occupied a bed of thorns. He knew very well that though Ludwig had seemed to accept the subordinate part assigned to him, he had never resigned himself to the humiliation of the Wittelsbachs. When the war of 1870 was about to begin and after it had been declared by France, Bismarck had some poignant doubts about the attitude that Ludwig would adopt; and it is certain that if a superabundance of money had not been spent and the co-operation of all who could influence the King obtained, Bavaria might have stood outside of the quarrel and the campaign so insanely provoked by the third Napoleon run on wholly different lines.

In Paris they charged certain French diplomatists with having misled their Government about the state of public feeling in Southern Germany; but these agents only wrote what was the truth. Prussia was profoundly unpopular among her reluctant allies, and in Bavaria, as well as in Würtemberg and Baden, public opinion favoured common action with France against her. Indeed, the possibility of a French alliance caused

considerable anxiety in Wilhelmstrasse, where they did not feel secure until numberless intrigues definitely turned the scales in Prussia's favour.

Even after the war broke out, it was only by the constant pressure brought to bear on Ludwig by men aware of certain moods during which he could be easily persuaded to adopt the opinions of the person speaking to him, that the co-operation of Bavaria was maintained. And after the deed was done it was bitterly regretted and, instead of uniting the two nations, separated them more thoroughly than ever. The Bavarian continued to hate the Prussian just as cordially after the peace of Frankfort as before it, and the Prussian had no more confidence in the fidelity of the Bavarian after the proclamation of the Empire for which he had been compelled to beg his support, than he had before the victory of Sedan made that Empire a possibility.

Not to mince matters, Bavarians have never believed the present German Empire will last, and look forward to the day when Prussia's supremacy will fall to pieces. Berlin knew this, of course, and some chose to disregard it, but of these Bismarck was not one, for in turns he flattered, encouraged, cajoled, blamed, and scolded the Bavarian Government, but never trusted its promises or assurances. He knew he could not dispense with its co-operation and accepted the fact as a necessary evil, but he would have infinitely preferred to be spared the anxieties that proceeded from Munich. Hence the overthrow of Prince Hohenlohe was a bitter disappointment.

Nearly every member of the different reigning Houses was compromised by intrigues in the present or the past, else the creation of the German Empire would have been an impossibility. Its Crown was disputed by the Kings of Bavaria, Saxony and Würtemberg, whilst Austria was strongly supported by tradition. It was allowed that the revival of the Empire had become a disagreeable, nay, an unavoidable necessity, but the one great and apparently insurmountable obstacle was the selection of a Head. The Prussian victories over the French, combined with the personality of King William I., and the respect in which he was held settled the question in favour of the Hohenzollerns. But even when his name was proposed as that of the only worthy successor of Charles the Great and Frederick Barbarossa, most of his supporters were under the belief that the dignity they were about to confer was elective and not hereditary. Bismarck outrivalled Machiavelli when he persuaded those whose help was essential to the completion of his work, that they were only creating an Empire and not giving an Imperial Crown to a particular dynasty. His dupes discovered too late how consistently he had fooled them. The Hohenzollerns had unscrupulously obtained a sceptre with which they would never part save under compulsion.

CHAPTER XVI

UNDERGROUND POLITICS

ALTHOUGH no one outside of Prussia was prepared for the outbreak of war in 1870, Prussia had been steadily working towards a crisis, the existence of which Bismarck had used every precaution to maintain the profoundest secrecy. When the moment was ripe the candidature of Prince Leopold von Hohenzollern to the Spanish Throne was seized as the first pretext at hand. Had an adequate cause not existed it was up to Bismarck to create one, and he would not have been found wanting.

But before embarking on the game of his life, he had —as we have already seen—to assure himself of the co-operation of his reluctant allies. In Bavaria especially, public feeling ran high and went out in strong sympathy to the French. At the risk of repetition we must go into this matter in some detail, as Ludwig's fate was involved in the issue. For, by some means or other, Bavaria's support must be had if Bismarck's best-laid scheme were not to go quite fatally agley.

At this fateful juncture he was exceptionally well served by certain of his agents. Herr von Holstein (not to be confounded with Count von Holnstein) was

sent to Munich and continued to the end the most loyal of Bismarck's *âmes damnées*. Arriving in Munich under an assumed name (for privacy had become an absolute need), Herr von Holstein saw Count Bray and other persons, and secured the co-operation of the "right" men to represent matters to the King in the light in which they must be regarded.

Ludwig was absent on an excursion to the Bavarian Alps when France declared war against Prussia. Within an hour of his return, in hot haste, to his castle of Berg, Count Bray sent a request for an audience, through Herr von Eisenhart, the King's private secretary. During the interview Eisenhart—a resolute partisan of Prussia—insisted on the impossibility of a peaceful settlement. But the King, who feared war and who did not care to see his country entangled in another so soon after the disastrous campaign of 1866, believed still that the calamity might be averted. For almost the whole of the night the two men discussed the different points at stake, but Eisenhart left in the early hours of the morning of July the 16th with the conviction that his Sovereign had decided to stand by Prussia at all costs.

Count Bray, however, felt greater hesitation. He was a Bavarian nobleman and it was repugnant to him to deliver his country, bound hands and feet, to the tender mercies of its secular enemy. Instead of appearing at Berg on the day following the King's return, he excused himself on the plea of the overwhelming pres-

sure of business, and sent instead Count Berchem, one of his secretaries, with a report stating the difficulties of the situation and leaving the responsibility of a decision entirely to the King. This was not what Herr von Eisenhart had expected and he did not conceal his disappointment. He telegraphed at once to Count Bray and the latter came the same afternoon to Berg on a conference with Ludwig, an interview at which von Eisenhart intended to be present.

Count Bray evidently wished to gain time in the hope that some unexpected incident might change the current of the King's thoughts. He was placed in a most awkward situation. Bound by certain promises to Prussia, he nevertheless knew her policy was diametrically opposed to the best interests of his own country. Of all the members of the Cabinet, he was perhaps the least infected with Prussian views, and refused to endorse the opinion of some of his colleagues that, in declining to stand by Prussia, Bavaria was dishonouring herself and breaking the word she had freely given to her ally. As for Count Berchem, although he could not assume any kind of responsibility, he was won over to the cause of Prussian Imperialism and hoped, besides several other persons, to prevail upon his royal master to vote the right way. He was also influenced by General von Pranckh, at the head of the War Office, who warned him before he left Munich for Berg, that if he did not receive next day orders to proceed with the mobilisation of the Army he would not be responsible for the con-

sequences. Eisenhart and Berchem sought the presence of the King, and both insisted so much on the necessity of supporting Prussia that at last the wretched, badgered Ludwig took up the pen and signed the momentous document.

Bismarck afterwards caused it to be said that it was of his own free will and enthusiasm that Ludwig II. cast in his lot with Prussia. Berlin newspapers published incredible stories of the language used by the King on the occasion, words which it was to the interest of Prussia to spread, since they indicated the complete subordination of himself and his country to the Chancellor's will. But they took care not to relate all the circumstances in which the poor young King had been driven to outrage his own feelings. They did not mention that Eisenhart had him wakened at six in the morning, after he had gone to bed barely two hours before, on the pretext that he had received news from Munich that the whole country would rise against its Sovereign if he did not consent to the mobilisation of the Army.

Had Ludwig been permitted to communicate with the chief statesmen in Munich, he would most likely have come to a different decision from that to which he acceded, out of very weariness. Bewildered by the complications confronting him and unable to estimate them at their proper value, he was readily led to view the situation both of Germany and Europe with deeply prejudiced eyes. Eisenhart, who thoroughly

understood the King's peculiarities of character and temper, also reckoned that his restless brain would not be able to endure the constant flow of words with which it was beset, and might collapse under arguments which it could not follow. After hours of pleading and as much travesty of the facts as was called for, the decree, already prepared for signature, was presented to the King, who (as we have seen) mechanically affixed his name to it.

Had not von Eisenhart as sedulously supported Bismarck (who was by no means ungrateful to him), it is doubtful whether Ludwig would have taken the grave resolution imposed upon him by Prussia. He did not care for the country and had thrown himself into its arms more out of pique than anything else. Moreover, he had not yet got over what he considered the ingratitude of his subjects, when they forced him to part from the only man who had ever roused in him sentiments which no one else could inspire. And later, when the people of Munich so plainly proved their hostility to Hohenlohe's policy, his irritation, no longer latent, became so violent he could not judge impartially of their reasons for mistrusting their Monarch. Ludwig was essentially a man of swift and sudden impulses, and the difficulty was to find him constant and consistent. That is where von Eisenhart "came in" and caught him at the psychological moment, since he knew the King's every mood and fancy.

All the Prussian faction at the Court of Munich was

aware of the part played by von Eisenhart at this momentous juncture, and after General Pranckh had been introduced to Ludwig II., to hear him confirm his wishes in regard to the mobilisation of the Army, the War Minister wrung the private secretary by the hand, with the remark, " You have done a work for which Germany shall remain for ever grateful to you." For " Germany " read " Prussia."

As for Ludwig, he was hoodwinked to the last. The faction which spurred him on relaxed no effort to make him believe that the whole of Bavaria was at his back. His Ministers, his aides-de-camp, his few personal friends, and a large number of the leading politicians and public men congratulated him warmly on his decision. When he returned to Munich on the 17th of July, he met with a reception the like of which had never greeted him before. The whole nation seemed to have gathered to see him pass and to cheer him, as he drove through the illuminated streets. No wonder his head was turned by an enthusiasm which appeared to proceed from all classes. In reality the ovation was elaborately stage-managed by the Prussian Imperialist party, and half of the hurrahing crowd was composed of police agents sent for the purpose from Berlin !

Meanwhile the Bavarian Chambers had been summoned to an extraordinary session. The Prussians would have given much to avoid the meeting, but the Constitution had imperative claims which could not be disregarded, and the Government required the assent

of the Legislative Bodies to the credits necessary for a speedy mobilisation. Before the session strenuous efforts were made to induce the deputies not to oppose the Cabinet's measures. They were reminded that a refusal to vote supplies would be a want of patriotism which might encourage the enemy and create a wrong impression abroad about the sincerity of the feelings roused by the declaration of the war in Southern Germany. Neither persuasion nor bribery was omitted by Prince Bismarck, but the Bavarian people revolted at the idea of ceding their independence at the bidding of a Power which only a few years before had vanquished their armies and compelled them to a peace which was still considered by many in the country as ignominious. The Chambers did not unreservedly accept the proposals of the Government, and a Commission was appointed to report upon them, after a careful examination of the documents which the Cabinet had submitted to the representatives for their perusal.

The Commission was composed of nine members, of whom six belonged to the Ultramontane or Clerical party, and the other three were Liberals. The Chairman was the Librarian of Würzburg University, Dr. Ruland, the secretary was Dr. Schleich, a well-known editor, whilst two other members, Dr. Jörg and Deputy Kolb, were entrusted with the duty of drawing up a record of the decisions arrived at, the former on the political and the latter on the financial questions raised by the Government. The result of their deliberations

was not what the Prussian faction had anticipated and, in view of later events, it will be necessary to consider it at some length to understand the real state of things in Germany at the outbreak of the war, a condition of things the public has either forgotten or never properly appreciated, owing to ignorance of the undercurrents of intrigue carried on by the Prussian Imperialist party in Bavaria as well as in the small States of Southern Germany. People in England believed the Bavarians marched with enthusiasm against France; on the contrary, they tried their hardest to remain outside of the conflict which the latter had unhappily provoked.

CHAPTER XVII

QUIS SEPARABIT ?

ON the 19th of July, 1870, the Bavarian Chambers met to hear the report of the Commission. Amidst profound silence, Dr. Jörg addressed the House.

" Gentlemen, the Commission has decided that, in the crisis through which we are passing, the country ought to preserve an attitude of armed neutrality. The Commission has not recognised that the *casus fœderis,* foreseen in the treaty of alliance of the 22nd of August, 1866, has arisen as yet and insists—I speak for a majority of its members—particularly on this point. The reason for the present sad complications lies outside the limits of German honour and German integrity." [Loud protests from the Prussian party.] " According to a report of the Prussian Ambassador in Paris of his conversation with the Duc de Gramont, French Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Duke told him that he thought it essential that all subjects of mistrust ought to be eliminated for the future, else the public would never be satisfied. The Minister spoke thus from the point of view that Prussia had not observed in regard to France the friendly '*procédés,*' as he termed them, which the latter had a right to expect; and that, as far as he knew, this conduct on Prussia's part had been

admitted by the other Great Powers. France did not desire to go to war, but, on the contrary, wished to remain upon good and friendly relations with Prussia, and the Duke said he was well aware that the Prussian Ambassador shared his views upon that subject. A direct letter from the King of Prussia to the Emperor Napoleon would, in the Duke's opinion, be the best way to settle differences. The Ambassador said he could only reply to this that when the King had authorised Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern to accept the Crown of Spain, he had never thought of harming the interests or hurting the dignity of the French nation. The King approved of the withdrawal of the candidature of the Prince of Hohenzollern, and he hoped and wished that after this declaration, every ground for the difficulties which had arisen between the two Governments would disappear.

"This report of the Prussian Ambassador's, gentlemen," proceeded Dr. Jörg, "proves that the French Government has absolutely no intention to attack Prussia. What, then, are we to say to the note addressed by Count von Bismarck to the North German Minister in Munich, which runs in the following terms? 'After the news had reached us that the Hereditary Prince of Hohenzollern had given up his candidature to the Spanish Throne and that his decision had been communicated officially to the French Imperial Government, the French Ambassador at Ems requested His Majesty the King to authorise him to telegraph to Paris

that His Majesty undertook for the future never to consent to a prince of the House of Hohenzollern accepting the Crown of Spain.' I need not point out here," interpolated Dr. Jörg, " that this report does not agree with the one of the Prussian Ambassador in Paris," and then he went on with the reading of Bismarck's note : " ' His Majesty the King had, upon this demand of the French Ambassador's, refused to receive him again and given orders to his aide-de-camp on duty upon that day to tell the Ambassador that His Majesty had nothing further to communicate to him. His Majesty the King of Bavaria will most certainly feel, as we do, that Count Benedetti must have spoken to the King during his usual morning walk in such a provocative manner that His Majesty was irritated against his will by this unheard-of demand on the part of the French Government.'

" This is all," commented Dr. Jörg, " that I have been able to learn from the authentic documents communicated to the Commission, and the impression which their perusal has made upon me has been that this awful war which, as we have heard, is about to break out, has been caused only by an unwilling or an accidental breach of Court etiquette; and I must say that this is the thing which, in the whole sad situation, affects me the least." [Indignation in the House.] " So I repeat once more, my opinion, which is that of the majority of the Commission, is to preserve an attitude of *armed neutrality.*"

Dr. Jörg's words were received with screams of indignation by the Prussian faction in the House. All the deputies felt that the fate of Bavaria was being decided for ever, but whilst the Nationalists were hoping against hope that the Government would be defeated on the question of armed intervention on the side of Prussia, the partisans of the latter were moving heaven and earth for a verdict in their favour. To this end Professor Sapp made an inflammatory speech, in which he tried to counteract the effect of the report of Dr. Jörg.

" Gentlemen," he exclaimed, " it was my intention to vote for an armed neutrality, but after what we have heard, I must change my opinion and tell you the kind of feeling which the words of the reporter of the Commission have aroused in my soul. I ask whether you wish to be the only Germans who refuse to defend the Fatherland. Do not forget that we also have German hearts and have never forgotten the words of that most German among all German princes, our late King, Ludwig I., when he said, ' We want to be Germans and to remain Bavarians.' What most rouses my indignation is the insolent invitation from France to conclude an alliance with Napoleon. An alliance with France could only be intelligible if we still hated our victor of 1866, but we all know that such is not the case; so to this offer, I shall give a true German reply : ' We would consider it a shame, a national shame, and an act of treason against our Fatherland, if we ever gave a thought to the possibility of such an alliance.' We have

no right to refuse the supplies required by the Government, and all that we can say is, that we pray God to grant victory to the German arms ! "

To this fiery declaration Dr. Ruland, who a few years before had brought a shell into the House, as a symbol of the only kind of friendship one could expect from Prussia, replied in the following terms : " I am one of the six members of the Commission who have declared, and this from deep conviction and not from any other motive, that an armed neutrality is the only attitude which we can adopt. The *casus fœderis* does not exist in the present circumstances. We still possess the right of free choice as to the conduct we must pursue, and we ought to choose to remain neutral in the conflict which has unfortunately arisen between two great nations. And by remaining neutral, I must repeat it again, gentlemen, we have nothing to fear from France."

These words, coming as they did from a man whom the whole country deeply respected, produced an immense impression, and it seemed as if the whole House desired to associate itself with them. Then one of Bismarck's staunchest supporters, Herr von Hörmann, formerly Minister of the Interior, rose to combat the arguments of Dr. Ruland. He addressed himself especially to the task of explaining that it was impossible to maintain the armed neutrality upon which they laid such stress, in view of the difficulties which might crop up should Prussia emerge triumphant out of the war. " You are running the risk, if you remain neutral," he

said, "to lose what you consider your most precious possession, that is, not the independence only, but the whole political existence of Bavaria. It is not Prussian interests, but Bavarian interests you are considering, when you vote the supplies."

After the vehement debate was over, Dr. Jörg's proposal of armed neutrality was rejected by 85 to 58. Another of like intent, but with a few amendments, brought forward by Dr. Huttler, another Clerical deputy, was thrown out by a narrow majority, 76 voting against it and 72 for. In the result a war credit of 18,260,000 florins was voted by 101 against 47, some Ultramontanes having at the last moment joined forces with the Liberals and voted for the proposals of the Government.

That night the streets of Munich were filled by a multitude of people sprung whence no one knew, who paraded the town, singing patriotic songs and shouting, "Long live Prussia! Long live Germany!" Bavaria apparently had ceased to exist.

On the 19th of July France declared war on Prussia and on the 20th of that month the Bavarian Upper House passed without debate the supplies sanctioned by the Lower House. Among the forty-nine members at this historical sitting were all the members of the Royal Family, the Princes Luitpold, Louis, Leopold, Adalbert, and the Dukes Charles Theodore and Louis in Bavaria; and on the same day the alliance with Prussia was solemnly announced. Among the telegrams which the King received in reply to his announcement

that he had resolved to brave once more the dangers of war, was one from King William I., that he had "at once assumed the command of the Bavarian Army and had amalgamated it with the third Prussian one, which he had put under the orders of his son."

Thus the Hohenzollern hastened to seize the prize he had won, and the military independence of Bavaria was at an end.

This wire opened the eyes of King Ludwig, who for the first time realised the enormity of his blunder. But it was too late to oppose plans in which he had acquiesced ere he comprehended their purport and importance. He could only submit to an evil which, had he only had beside him one disinterested man with the welfare of Bavaria, and not that of Prussia at heart, he might have averted. As it was, he was rushed into a war which he had all along condemned, and which was to cost the life of thousands of his subjects, without reaping the slightest advantage. He had been duped, and he knew it; which did not tend to make his life easier, or his conscience quieter.

On the 27th of July the Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia made a solemn entry into Munich, as Commander-in-Chief of the Bavarian and South German troops. He drove in an open carriage along with the King and the latter's brother, Prince Otto, escorted by a mounted squadron of Cuirassiers, to the Residenz, where he was received by the Dowager Queen surrounded by all the princesses of the Royal Family. His stay

in the capital was brevity itself, for he hastened to the front, refusing to prolong his visit for another night.

To tell the truth, neither the Crown Prince nor King Ludwig felt at ease in each other's presence. The Heir to the Prussian Monarchy was a staunch Imperialist, far more so than was his father, and felt, as he expressed it to me personally a long time afterwards, that the German princes ought to remember that they were but the Peers of the Empire, "les Pairs de l'Empire," as he said in French. On the other hand, King Ludwig was an ardent separatist, inasmuch as he refused to discuss the possibility of any German Sovereign accepting a subordinate position in regard to another one, be he even an Emperor. This was bound to lead to friction, and though no hint of hostile sentiment appeared in those days, when the idea of the Empire was but dawning, it was to lead to sad consequences which, happily for all interested parties, no one yet foresaw during those eventful days of July, 1870, when it was still uncertain what the war might hold in reserve for Germany.

But the fact that it was a Prussian Prince who had taken the supreme command over the Bavarian Army could neither be pleasant for it nor acceptable to the nation, which felt humiliated to be treated like an untrained child in need of a governess or tutor. The King also felt affronted at being passed over for a Prussian Prince. It is humanly certain he would never have put himself at the head of his troops, but, all the same,

it would have been courteous to allow him the option of refusal. Instead, he had been simply ignored, and the thought rankled in his mind and increased the sadness with which he had been suddenly overwhelmed.

One of those fits of impatience from which he so frequently suffered seized him, and when the news of the German victory at Sedan reached Munich, and the town was about to hoist bunting, Ludwig sent for one of his Ministers, Herr von Pfeufer, and gave him the following orders: "Until to-day there has not existed either a German Empire, or a German Republic, or a general German Union. I will, therefore, refuse to allow any flags except Bavarian ones to be displayed on public buildings. What I would prefer is that no flags should be flown at all."

According to directions he had received from Berlin, Herr von Pfeufer wished to display the Prussian flag alongside of the Bavarian. He therefore found himself in a grave predicament, from which, happily, a merciful Providence delivered him. The rain fell in torrents, and the Minister was saved from a dilemma which might have bothered Solomon himself.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LOST OPPORTUNITY

ON the 1st of September Ludwig returned to Munich from his castle of Berg, whither he had repaired after the visit of the Prussian Crown Prince to the Bavarian capital. Next morning news of the battle of Sedan reached him. As we have already said, he refused to allow the public buildings to be beflagged, and when it was proposed to hold a demonstration before the Royal Residence, he declared that he would not be present, and that his mother, as a Prussian princess, would be the most appropriate person to acknowledge the greetings of the crowd, since the "Prussian victories" did not interest him. His sentiments were reported to Berlin by one of the numerous spies who served Wilhelmstrasse in Bavaria; they were never forgotten, and helped to create a great deal of ill-feeling between the King and his Prussian relatives, which was further enhanced by the tenor of a letter which he sent to the Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia, hoping that, whatever might happen in the future, "the independence of Bavaria would be respected."

This feeling that his beloved country had to be guarded against Prussian ambition was the leitmotiv

of all Ludwig's actions. He had been brought up to mistrust his cousins in Berlin and to believe them animated with hostile feelings against him and his subjects. An exceedingly clever man, he had not failed to notice the different currents which were dividing public opinion in Bavaria, and he knew that Bismarck had been strenuously working towards, if not annexation, at least the complete subjection of the different South German States to Prussia.

To counteract Bismarck's underhand diplomacy he did his best to preserve an attitude that would compel others to consider his actions as well as his person, but it was his misfortune never to have an adviser strong enough to sustain him in his heroic resistance to obdurate Fate. His Ministers, from Prince Hohenlohe onwards, all succumbed to the influence of that Imperialist idea which he disliked so much, and concluded that though it was impossible for a small German State to hold its own in Europe, yet a great German Empire might attain to the position of the predominant power in that same Europe which, of recent years, had got accustomed to despise the "petitesses d'Allemagne," to use the words of the famous Princesse des Ursins.

Everybody who had had anything to do with politics during the last twenty-five years or so was aware that Austria had "shot her bolt," and that the North German Confederation must be reorganised. The fact that in Russia, the only country that could have restrained the vaulting ambition of the Hohenzollern dynasty, the

sovereign had been entirely won over to the interests of Prussia, with which the most intimate ties were binding him, rendered the moment exceedingly favourable to Prussian statesmen who should set about pushing their country into pre-eminence and, naturally, they made the best of the opportunity. The campaign of 1866 enabled them to oust the Habsburgs from the leading part in Germany; that of 1870 would entitle them boldly to proclaim their aims, provided no serious opposition were offered by a German prince capable of influencing public opinion in his country. The one person who could have led this opposition was the King of Bavaria. He had, therefore, to be propitiated or muzzled. Of this Ludwig was conscious, and the knowledge did not tend to make him view with more favourable eyes Prussia's encroachments on his authority or soften his general sentiments towards her.

Bismarck often spoke with his confidential friends of the strange character of the King of Bavaria and of the difficulties he had experienced at the time of the proclamation of the German Empire. He had a real admiration for Ludwig II., in spite of the disdain with which he so often spoke of him. The stern old statesman was at heart a just man and appreciated the painful position in which the young Monarch was placed, when he had, so to say, to sign the death-warrant of the ambitions of his race and acknowledge himself the vassal of an Empire, to which he had himself as much right as the King of Prussia.

This Imperial idea which for centuries had prevailed in Germany rested principally on the elective principle, and the reason why Austria was so unpopular was precisely because she had appropriated the dignity to herself. Bismarck, accordingly, had to emulate the policy of the Habsburgs without repeating their numerous mistakes. His task was far from easy when one remembers, on the one hand, the respective positions of the small States that had formed part of the German Confederation, and, on the other, that Prussia aspired to destroy the Union or transform it into an Empire of which she was to take the lead and which should embrace all her neighbours as well as herself. The old King William I. was the only man in Berlin who harboured the delusion that he would remain King of Prussia, a distinction which he prized far more than the Imperial dignity for which he was never anxious. All the others understood perfectly well that Bismarck was bent upon suppressing the different States and confronting Europe with one powerful German Empire.

Ludwig II. also understood it and it wrung his soul. He would have accepted the Holy German Empire, such as it had existed in olden times, but his noble and proud nature refused to sanction the monstrous lie that this was the very institution that was being restored. He knew and owned that he knew that what was happening was nothing less than the conquest of his country, not perhaps by *force majeure*, though this was never far distant, but by fine words veiling a disgusting untruth.

When Prussia, with the connivance of certain Bavarian statesmen, obtained control of the Army, Bavaria's independence was virtually destroyed and her *status* was only that of a Prussian province. Ludwig had hoped for very different things on the day he had assumed the royal power, and believed with the due enthusiasm of youth, that he should accomplish great things and become another " Roi Soleil."

In Berlin they apprehended, be it said, his consuming bitterness, and King William I., in particular, did what he could to efface the sad impressions which tortured his nephew. He very carefully refrained from irritating him, and the pains he was at in this regard may be illustrated by a suggestive incident. Notwithstanding the visits which the Emperor paid him at Munich on his way to and from Gastein, where he generally went for a cure every summer, Ludwig refused to return these visits or to cross the Prussian frontier. His obstinacy occasioned his Ministers so much distress that at length Berlin deemed it advisable to allay their anxieties. Consequently they despatched a diplomat to assure Ludwig's private secretary, Herr von Eisenhart, that " the Emperor never expected Ludwig II. to return the visits paid to him at Munich, regarding him, because of his heavy sacrifices for Prussia's sake, with different eyes from those with which he viewed other German princes, and did not expect from him the acts of allegiance which he did from the others."

All these concessions, however, left Ludwig un-

moved. His wounded feelings could not be soothed, the more so that he had learned that deliberate falsehood had been resorted to to procure his acquiescence in a policy he had loathed. He had been assured that it was the unanimous wish of the whole of Southern Germany to become incorporated in the new Empire, and that his resistance to what was a universal desire would not only seriously diminish his influence in his country, but also jeopardise the affection of his subjects. In these circumstances he tried to effect a compromise between his own feelings and the oft-repeated advice of his Ministers. It was a weak thing to do and the course he adopted was the *fons et origo* of later misfortune, for it left him disarmed and deprived him of the support of those who might have helped him to contest the ambition and covetousness of his uncle, Prince Luitpold.

In his situation Ludwig had only two alternatives. Either he ought frankly to have accepted the inevitable or to have stood by his convictions and boldly avow his intentions to throw off the Prussian yoke and offer France the hand of friendship. This attitude, had he been courageous enough to adopt it, might have won for him a position far beyond that of any other German prince and made him renowned in history, to say nothing of the fact that it would probably have averted the dread catastrophe of the European War. But Ludwig's energy had been sapped by the baneful influence of Richard Wagner. He had lost the will to struggle

against adverse fate and could only batter himself against the iron bars that divided him from the outside world.

Indeed, it is difficult to imagine anything feebler than his conduct during the winter of 1870–71, when, against his will, he consented to become the principal artificer of the new German Empire, and it was this inconsistency that was his ultimate ruin. The fact is, the King, though conscious of the importance of his dignity as well as of his place in the world, had not sufficient pluck, sufficient manhood, sufficient sincerity to assert himself. He had but to say the word and the German Empire would have been an impossibility. Had not the poisonous breath of Wagner sullied his young life, he would probably have uttered that everlasting "No." As it was, he remained silent; half from apathy and half from imperfect comprehension of the situation such as it then was in German history. But, later, he paid so terrible a price for his folly and abstinence that we cannot reproach him with his physical cowardice and his indifference to questions which, to his loss, he treated as personal whereas they were of general and universal interest not only to Bavaria but also to the whole world.

CHAPTER XIX

"UNSTABLE IN ALL HIS WAYS"

AFTER Sedan Bismarck knew his opportunity had come. While Prussia's laurels were fresh the States would, surely, be indulgent. Moreover, there was exhilaration in victory. He was also aware that only the proclamation of Germany one and indivisible could arrest the separatist tendencies of Bavaria and other Southern States.

Yet the famous statesman's task was rendered all the harder by the deep-seated dislike of Prussia. She had always been an object of suspicion, and now, after the fighting, here was a fresh rumour that while the soldiers of Bavaria and Würtemberg were always told off for the tough work either of attack or defence, the Prussians were assigned "soft jobs." Why? was the constant question. "Only to give our friends and allies the place of honour," explained the Prussian commanders, "which happens also to be the place of danger." But the good Bavarians were not convinced: they knew that William I. wanted to save his men. Prince Frederick, the old man's successor, apropos of the distrust of the Prussians, remarked in his Diary that it was no light thing to have "to fight against

the French with troops who hate us and who have not been drilled in our school."

That they did most cordially detest the Prussians the Crown Prince himself learned after the battle of Woerth. Having congratulated a Bavarian soldier on his bravery, he was greatly taken aback by the retort, "Yes, we have all been fighting well, but if we had been up against those pigs of Prussians, you'd have seen something quite different and much better." It is obvious that the Bavarian fighting man had not identified his interlocutor.

This historic anecdote illuminates much, but the fact underlying it did not upset Bismarck, who was case-hardened, though it exasperated the Crown Prince of Prussia, who had not borne away with him any pleasant remembrance of his short visit to Munich before his departure for the front.

It will be remembered that Ludwig had written to the Prussian Crown Prince. The letter angered Prince Frederick, who was unable or unwilling to understand a vacillating and unsettled mind like Ludwig's and conceived a violent dislike for him. Doubtless he was aware of the unpleasant rumours coupling the name of the King with that of Wagner, and declared to his friends that he had found Ludwig terribly changed in the two years which had elapsed since he had seen him, and that he was extremely nervous and excited.

Ludwig II. knew that comparisons to his disadvantage were made between him and old William I., the Berlin

Press representing that he was afraid to show himself among his troops. And this irritated him so much, that he was always giving contradictory orders to his Ministers, in a frantic hope of saving what could be still salved of Bavarian independence.

Meanwhile diplomatic negotiations were begun with the different German States concerning the proclamation of the Empire. Bismarck's original idea had been to constitute the States of the former German Confederation into one vast realm the head of which would be a President with the title of Emperor. But he was anxious this title should be offered to the victorious and aged King of Prussia by a German sovereign, preferentially by the King of Bavaria as the most important. In order to propitiate him, the latter was invited to visit King William, first at Fontainebleau and afterwards at Versailles, where they offered to put the Palace of Trianon at his disposal, but Ludwig shilly-shallied and sent no answer.

Next it was decided to profit by the conference of delegates of the various German States which was held in Munich on the 22nd of September, and to send to Ludwig one of the ablest men in the Prussian Home Office, Herr von Delbrück, who was charged to prevail upon the Monarch to accept the invitation of the King of Prussia, and to visit the headquarters of the Army, where he was assured of a warm welcome. This in all probability he would have received, since it was to the interest of Prussia at that time to show marked atten-

tion to the Bavarian Sovereign, despite the fact that he had not a friend in William I.'s entourage. But though Herr von Delbrück saw the King, his mission was fruitless, partly because the full extent of the duplicity that had been used towards him was at last dawning upon Ludwig.

One of the baits which had been dangled before his eyes by his Prussian advisers when urging him to acquiesce in Bismarck's policy was the prospect of territorial aggrandisement, in reward of the great service he had rendered to Prussia by mobilising his troops instead of keeping to the armed neutrality which the bulk of his people wanted. As compensation for ignoring public opinion in Bavaria, he had hoped to obtain a part of the territory belonging to the Duchy of Baden, which in its turn was to receive a slice of Alsace-Lorraine, whose annexation to the Empire was, in September, 1870, a foregone conclusion. But when he mentioned his hope Bismarck decidedly squashed it, declaring that cession of Baden territory was out of the question, and that neither the Grand Duke of Baden nor the King of Prussia would agree to it.

Nevertheless, he consented to his Ministers going to Versailles, whither the delegates of Würtemberg, Baden and Hesse had already preceded them; and accordingly, on the 20th of October, the three Bavarian Ministers, Count Bray, General von Pranckh, and Baron von Lutz, left Munich and joined their colleagues at head-quarters. The King had instructed them not to accept

any formal engagements without having submitted them to him, but von Lutz, and especially General von Pranckh, wished to come to an immediate understanding, on the ground that delay might be prejudicial to the interests of Bavaria. Count Bray, however, refused to associate himself with them, with the result that the first conference was attended only by von Delbrück, who represented Prussia, and the delegates from Würtemberg, Baden and Hesse.

On hearing of this Ludwig was incensed not only with Prussia and Bismarck but also with his own Ministers, who, he contended, ought to have been present at the conversations in order to put forward his opinions about the proclamation of a German Empire under the supremacy of Prussia. He vowed he would abdicate at once and summoned his brother, Prince Otto, from headquarters, obliging him to travel post haste, in obedience to his command. When the Prince arrived at Hohenschwangau the King spoke with him for hours together concerning his intention to resign the Crown to him, and did not grant him permission to return to the Army for a long time. He was greatly exasperated and refused to hear what steps his Ministers contemplated. Matters grew so desperate that Bismarck cast about for some trustworthy person to converse with the King and ascertain the points which were so disagreeable to him in respect of the proclamation of the new Empire that he refused even to discuss them, in the forlorn hope that he might be

brought to see that they were only the figments of his imagination.

But where was there such a person? At last the Grand Duke of Baden, who had been most solicitous for a settlement, suggested Herr Gelzer, one of his friends and confidants. Having been entrusted with a letter from the Grand Duke to Ludwig, Gelzer next wrote to the King's secretary, Herr von Eisenhart, one of the most active agents of Prussia in Bavaria, inquiring whether His Majesty would see him, after becoming acquainted with the contents of the Grand Duke's letter, and whether, if this were not practicable at once, he would receive him later.

Ludwig replied with great politeness to the Grand Duke, but sent the following message to Gelzer, insisting that it should be transmitted exactly as he had framed it. It simply stated that "he did not wish to impose upon him the fatigue of a journey to distant Hohenschwangau." No one but a man thoroughly in earnest would have accepted this rebuff, but Gelzer plucked up courage to write again to Eisenhart, who in turn worried the King so much that at last Ludwig bade him go to Munich and see what the Grand Duke of Baden's friend wanted of him.

Eisenhart, overjoyed, had an interview with Gelzer, on the 18th of November, 1870, at the hotel of the Four Seasons in Munich, when the latter urged him to arrange a meeting between the King and the Grand Duke, who wished to explain personally several points

connected with the Imperial question. If this were not feasible, he implored Eisenhart to persuade Ludwig to accept the invitation to Versailles so that he might follow, at first hand, the course of the negotiations. The private secretary promised to do all he could to induce his royal master to comply with the requests addressed to him from the headquarters of the Army, where the King of Prussia was staying.

Nevertheless, when he reported to the King the purport of his interview with Gelzer, the Monarch remarked, "Though I am aware that, from many points of view, my journey to Versailles is desirable, I do not feel well enough just now to undertake it; I don't think I could stand the fatigue of the trip." And he added, "My journey, besides, would depend upon my getting certain guarantees of the future independence of Bavaria which I have asked for. If they refuse them, then nothing in the world will induce me to go to Versailles. Don't worry me any more; I have quite made up my mind."

In the meanwhile Ludwig had been expected at Versailles, but as time passed and he did not arrive, Bismarck grew impatient. Judicious pressure having been brought to bear upon them, the three Bavarian Ministers decided to agree to the arrangements proposed by Prussia without referring them to their Sovereign. Count Bray alone appeared disposed to protest, but his colleagues, Lutz and General von Pranckh, forced his hand, by explaining that his resist-

ance would be unavailing and by reminding him of the words of Bismarck, who had declared to the delegates, that while it was unavoidable that the Allied Sovereigns should relinquish some of their former rights and prerogatives, they would find it easier to renounce them in favour of an Emperor than be compelled to do so in favour of the King of Prussia.

Ludwig II. was furious when he heard of what had taken place at Versailles. Not all Eisenhart's blandishments could appease his rage and indignation at his betrayal by those in whom he had placed his confidence. He refused to sign the decrees of his Ministers and wrote to all the members of the Royal Family asking them to let him have their opinion on the matter of the proclamation of a German Empire. Neither Eisenhart nor Count von Holnstein, who was his favourite at that time, could make him see that things had gone too far to alter them. He remained obstinate for some days; when suddenly his mood changed and he sent a telegram to Count Bray telling him to go and see Bismarck and say that he would forward his decision in three days. In the interval the most persistent efforts were made in vain to get him to write to the old King William and inform him that he accepted the arrangements agreed to at Versailles.

There is an element of mystery in this episode of Ludwig's single-handed resistance to the strongest Prussian influences. Judging by his conduct throughout the crisis, it is difficult to imagine that he could, at

a moment's notice and in spite of Bismarck's adroit flattery, have so entirely changed his mind as proved to be the case. But according to certain queer stories circulated at the time at Hohenschwangau, there arrived one evening a stranger who asked to be admitted to the King and who, when alone with him, removed a wig and beard and disclosed the well-known features of Richard Wagner, the evil genius of the House of Wittelsbach, who after a few hours' stay left his friend a changed being, resigned to the inevitable against which he had been kicking so long and so pertinaciously.

CHAPTER XX

THE GERMAN EMPEROR

OUT of love for his native land Ludwig stipulated that, in return for his acceptance of the proclamation of the German Empire, Bavaria should retain control over her Army and have her own diplomatic representation abroad. The Prussians would not hear of such a thing, and one of its opponents, the Crown Prince Frederick, even talked of using force to oblige Bavaria to comply with the arrangements proposed by Bismarck. The latter, however, a wily diplomatist, knew that force was no remedy and tried to obtain by ruse what he could not get by good-will.

Though he had laughed outright at Ludwig's suggestion that the Imperial Crown should be worn alternately by a Hohenzollern and a Wittelsbach, adding impatiently, "King Ludwig lives in a world of dreams," yet he devoted himself with characteristic perseverance to overcome the resistance of the Sovereign who, alone in Germany, stood up for the rights of the smaller States. He made friends with Count von Holnstein and Eisenhart, at whose instigation the King had signed his own death-warrant, and the former advised the Chancellor to write himself to Ludwig and play

upon the vanity which was one of the most decided weaknesses in his noble and proud character. Holnstein hastened to Hohenschwangau with this epistle, and thanks to his entreaties and those of Eisenhart—to which, if all one hears be true, was added the weight of a letter from Richard Wagner, who, from his Swiss cottage, still moved many springs in the complicated machinery of this gigantic intrigue—Ludwig at last wrote to King William I. of Prussia, in the terms which had been suggested all along by those around him who, whilst pretending to be attached to him, were bound body and soul to Prussia.

Count von Holnstein hurried to Versailles, but so great was his fear lest the King should change his mind, that Eisenhart was told to remain in Hohenschwangau and not to leave Ludwig alone until the proclamation of the Empire had become an accomplished fact. The poor King, when his first moments of exaltation were over, reproached himself bitterly, and they could hear him walk up and down his room the whole of the night after Holnstein had left, exclaiming, "What have I done! what have I done!"

But he had nevertheless to drain to the lees the bitter cup presented to him, and wrote not only to Bismarck, in reply to his message, but also to the three German Sovereigns who had consented to offer the Imperial Crown to the head of the House of Hohenzollern. He had been duped, deceived, betrayed, but he fell with dignity, and submitted with proud resigna-

tion to destiny. Throughout life he remained a King and even at the last died like a King.

In the meanwhile, at Versailles, his health was being drunk with an enthusiasm which was as false as it was insincere. Bismarck when proposing the toast declared that Ludwig should always find in him a devoted and faithful servant, and heaped flatteries on the head of the man whom he had humiliated and whose independence he had destroyed. Ludwig's resistance had, however, been of some avail, inasmuch as, owing to his efforts, Bavaria retained control of her posts, telegraphs, railways, and other public institutions. Her diplomatic representation abroad was also left intact, but the Army was put under Prussian commanders, and all military matters henceforward were to be decided only by Prussia without reference to the Bavarian Government. The King could not but feel bitterly the subordinate position which had been forced upon him and which transformed him from the head of his Army into a Prussian general obliged to obey the orders of his chief. The fact that the officers of the Bavarian troops were to remain Bavarians, as they had been in the past, did not suffice to soothe his susceptibilities, because he realised that none but a thoroughgoing partisan of Prussia would ever be allowed to obtain or to occupy high military position in Bavaria.

On the 18th of January, 1871, the Empire was proclaimed at Versailles. All the German princes were present at the ceremony excepting Ludwig II., whose

absence was the subject of comment, but, for various reasons, not of regret. His presence might have proved embarrassing to the King of Prussia and Bismarck, who had tricked him into assenting to what was absolutely odious to him; and it would have also been a silent reproach to those other German princes who had not stood out, as he had done, for at least some vestiges of their former independence. He remained in Munich, where he pondered sadly the many mistakes he had made.

Gloomy and despondent, he nursed the grudge he bore those who had kept the word of promise to his ear and broken it to his hope. He had never cared for his mother's family, but, after the war, his antipathy to the Hohenzollerns increased and broke out in force when the Bavarian troops, the Crown Prince Frederick at their head, made their solemn entry into Munich after the conclusion of peace. Ludwig then was made to feel the cruel fact that, in his own kingdom, he occupied but a secondary position, and that it was not he to whom were due the brilliant successes of Bavarian arms, but the Prussian Prince who had not deputed the glorious task of leading the soldiers back to their homes after the campaign.

Trifling incidents inflamed his irritation. For instance, he wished out of courtesy to confer the distinction of Colonel-in-Chief of one of his regiments on the Crown Prince, but when he mentioned it to his guest Frederick said the matter did not depend on him

alone and that he would have to refer it to the Emperor, without whose permission he could not accept the honour, adding playfully that "he did not know whether the uniform would suit his heavy figure."

Ludwig took this remark in very bad part and complained about it to several people. In angry mood he thought of getting even with the Crown Prince by declining, on the score of indifferent health, to appear at the banquet in honour of the soldiers who had returned from the war. The Ministers, horrified at this want of courtesy to the Crown Prince, begged the King to reconsider his decision, entreating him to turn up, if only for a few minutes, as his absence would be sure to be misinterpreted and might even be construed as a political demonstration. They added that if he did not show himself to his faithful subjects on such a day, he would grievously vex them and endanger his popularity. The King agreed to think the matter over, but reflection did not change his mind and the banquet took place without him. As he had been warned, the people of Munich resented his cavalier conduct. However, they witnessed, thanks to his egregious folly, the German Crown Prince receive all the homage of the assembly as if he were the real Sovereign of Bavaria.

During that night King Ludwig left Munich in secret for the castle of Berg, where, four hours later, his private secretary was bidden, by mounted messenger, to join him, and Prince Frederick left the Bavarian capital without seeing its Sovereign. He

was accompanied to the station by all the princes of the Royal House, from whom he parted with great cordiality. But the discourtesy with which he had been treated was to bear bitter fruit later.

Nevertheless, in spite of Ludwig's want of politeness to his Prussian guest, Berlin continued to load him with flattery, and immediately after the Crown Prince's visit the old Emperor William himself arrived at Ratisbon on his way to Gastein, and the King was reluctantly obliged to meet him there. But this time nothing occurred to mar the interview. The Emperor had made up his mind not to be offended at any eccentricity of his young relative and made himself extremely pleasant; whilst the King was calmer and more collected than he had been after his talk with the Crown Prince Frederick, who, despite his many remarkable qualities and real kindness of character, had more than his own share of Prussian arrogance. In the circumstances the Kaiser behaved to Ludwig as if he were his equal and avoided any offensive display of Imperial dignity. Ludwig was not slow to appreciate this delicacy and consequently also showed himself at his best. But nevertheless he could not be prevailed upon to remain at Ratisbon all the time William I. stayed there, and returned to Berg ere the Emperor departed for Gastein.

This interview of the two Sovereigns was repeated a few weeks later, when the Emperor, on his way back to Berlin, stopped for a few days at Hohenschwangau

with his cousin the Dowager Queen of Bavaria. Ludwig could not refrain from being his mother's guest on this occasion, which gladdened the Prussian party in Bavaria, as they thought it might lead to the establishment of closer relations between the two Courts. Ludwig, however, could not overcome his prejudices against everything Prussian, and refused point-blank to return the visits of the Emperor and of the Crown Prince, or set foot in Berlin, which he detested, without having ever seen it. Having been continually surrounded by Prussian sympathisers, who had "let him down" basely, he had seen the worst and not the best sides, if such there be, of that nation, and cared neither for them nor their capital.

But apart from his antipathy to the Hohenzollerns and their subjects, Ludwig was daily growing shyer and more desirous of solitude. After the events of 1870 a fixed melancholy usurped his old vivacity and eagerness for enjoyment. He avoided people and, whenever he heard of an impending visit of Royalty, delegated to his mother or his brother, Prince Otto, the duty of entertainment and himself disappeared to one of his many castles, or shooting-boxes, returning only after the royal guest had taken leave. He used to complain of headache and sleeplessness, and his nervousness increased to an alarming degree.

Probably one may trace to this time the first symptoms of his malady, and it is also likely that the sorrows and disappointments he had experienced had much to

do with the development of the insidious disease which was to be the cause of his untimely end. His attendants, instead of changing the current of his thoughts, appeared to take a delight in aggravating his sentiments and were not above representing him to others as almost a madman. This was as unfortunate as it was wicked, for both Bismarck and his agents in Bavaria were always on tenterhooks with Ludwig, who had been heard to declare that, after all, the work of 1871 might yet be undone, or at least modified. In these circumstances it was to their advantage to make the most of the rumour that the young King was not responsible for his actions, and to be prepared with a declaration of his insanity should he ever prove dangerous to the policy which he had been compelled to accept.

As a specimen of the reports which Bismarck used to receive touching the doings at the Bavarian Court, take the following message of 1871: "Before every audience and Court ceremony the King drinks strong wines and liqueurs and then says the most extraordinary things. He speaks of abdicating in favour of Prince Otto, who, however, does not in the least care to become a Sovereign. This last fact is known to the Ultramontane party, who are putting forward a candidate of their own, in the person of Prince Luitpold, who, they consider, would make a good King. Perhaps they will succeed, although he has no claim to the succession, so long as Prince Otto lives."

Absit omen!

CHAPTER XXI

THE STRANGE CASE OF PRINCE OTTO

PRINCE OTTO was three years younger than the King. He had always been sickly and was only reared with great difficulty, requiring constant care and attention throughout boyhood. Nevertheless, he ultimately developed into a handsome, energetic youth and, when sixteen years old, presented in every respect the image of health. The brothers, though they constantly quarrelled in their earlier days, were devoted to each other, and the King relied much on Prince Otto, often seeking his advice and companionship. He used frequently to say, especially after his engagement to the Duchess Sophie Charlotte had been broken off, that he need not marry because Otto would continue the direct line of the Wittelsbachs. When the war broke out the latter's engagement with an Austrian archduchess was about to be arranged, but the plan fell through and Otto started for the front almost immediately after the Bavarian troops had crossed the French frontier.

At first he was attached to the headquarters of the Army, where it was hoped that his nervous system, which already had shown signs of derangement, would

not suffer so much as if he were in the field. But the sensitive young man was terribly shocked at all the sad scenes he had to witness and he soon became so ill that the question of his being obliged to leave his post would have inevitably cropped up, even if the King, in his anger against the Prussians, had not recalled him to Munich with the idea of abdicating in his favour, to which we have already alluded.

Prince Otto was as deeply humiliated as his brother was at the turn events had taken, and as little inclined to tolerate Prussian domination. He could hardly conceal his feelings and allowed others to perceive that he thought the whole political situation was out of joint. The Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia, a keen observer, wrote in his Diary the following significant note about Ludwig's only brother and heir:

"Prince Otto came to take leave of me before his departure for Munich. He was looking pale and very ill. He sat shivering, as if attacked by the ague, all the time I explained the necessity for our working together in all military and diplomatic matters. I could not make out whether he understood me or only listened unheedingly to what I was saying."

After Otto's return to Bavaria, his nervousness increased; perhaps subconsciously the King's disorder, now apparent, reacted on him. The two brothers, fond as they were of each other, were far too much alike in temperament to be really mutually helpful. But at that time it was impossible to foresee what the future

had in store for them, and the Prussian party in Bavaria —perhaps more active now than ever—remarking that Prince Otto was, if possible, more rabidly anti-Prussian than his brother, conceived the plan of removing him somehow from the arena of practicable politics. Doctors furnished the desired diagnosis, from which it appeared that the climate of Munich was unsuitable, and accordingly Otto was despatched to Italy for the winter, with an aide-de-camp who was entirely in the interests of the Foreign Office at Berlin. The Prince, whose nerves were highly strung and whose health demanded perfect quiet, was allowed whilst in Naples to indulge in all kinds of excesses, which completely turned his brain, already affected by dementia, the curse of his ill-fated House. When he returned to Munich he was no longer his former careless, happy self, but sunk in a profound melancholy which nothing, not even the companionship of his beloved brother, could dissipate.

In 1872 it began to be rumoured that something was radically wrong with the beloved young Prince, who was as popular as the King himself among the Bavarian people. At first they could not believe it, but the Royal doctors insisted on consultation of specialists in mental diseases. They met at last with the consent of Ludwig, who was in despair at the misfortune which threatened Otto, in whom his best hopes for the future were centred. In the end the Prince was pronounced incurably insane and it was necessary to put him under restraint.

It is singular that the doctor entrusted with his case was Dr. von Gudden, who perished afterwards with the King in the lake of Starnberg. He had decided that Otto must be sequestered from his relations and had him conveyed to the castle of Nymphenburg first, and to lonely Fürstenried afterwards. The doctor was one of the staunchest supporters of the Prussian party in Bavaria, and when one remembers the part he played in the life-story of the King and his brother, the question unwittingly arises whether they were both so entirely insane as he represented them to be. It is certain that no means of curing Prince Otto was resorted to beyond that of restraint under conditions which were calculated to hasten madness rather than prevent its development. And it is another puzzle how the King, who from the first time he set eyes on him took a violent dislike to Gudden, allowed his much-loved brother to be confided to his charge. The mystery in the whole story of Prince Otto's illness has never been solved.

Ludwig had been bitterly disappointed with the course of the events of 1870–71. They blazoned to all the world the failure of his efforts for his beloved Bavaria, and the loss of its independence caused by his folly in trusting people in whom he reposed the completest confidence was unforgettable. Lonelier than ever after he had been parted from his only brother, his experiences of mankind had been so odious that they immeasurably increased his distrust and mis-

anthropy. His ambition had been to play a noble part in the h story of his country, to make it great and powerful, and he found out, to his intense chagrin, that he had been working for the aggrandisement of Prussia and its ruling dynasty. His own mother had forsaken him and his uncles and other relatives gone over to the enemy. All the pride and haughtiness of his race rose in rebellion against the desecration of principles and ideals he had been taught to consider as sacred and inalienable.

Really, it was not surprising that this handsome, brilliant young King, who, from the hour of his birth, had been the idol of his country, should become weary, listless and dissatisfied with life. He grew morose and moody and kept his thoughts to himself, seeking in books and music and art a foil to the dark thoughts which filled his brain and destroyed his peace of mind. There was almost an excuse for the solitary King in that he was surrounded with disaffection and that the ambition of his uncle, Prince Luitpold, had already been awakened in regard to the throne. His relations with Richard Wagner, too, had been baneful, for they furnished a pretext for people calling him insane and deficient in moral tone, and had weakened his will-power and rendered him indifferent to public opinion.

His nervousness might have been alleviated if he had been regarded sympathetically and had been allowed to lead a simple mode of life, in which night should not be turned into day and in which he could

live, move and have his being, "far from the madding crowd." But these things were denied him. Constantly he was worried into doing this or that which was displeasing to him, until, goaded out of all patience, he was driven to confide in his servants rather than his customary advisers; and the former betrayed him with equal alacrity.

Rumours concerning his state of health were assiduously circulated by his enemies, and in 1874 his condition was alleged to be so serious that they began to speak quite openly in Munich about it and to express fears that he had become as mad as his brother. Things reached such a pass that his illness was mentioned in the Press, which urged the necessity of appointing a Regent to administer the country. The editor who had ventured to advance such an opinion was brought to trial and sentenced to six months' imprisonment, though he called as witnesses several members of the Chamber of Deputies, who swore that the subject of the article was everywhere spoken of among the people and in all the restaurants and beer-halls of Munich. His conviction, however, only aggravated the scandal, and perhaps this was only what had been sought for.

That the King was conscious of some change in his state of mind is probable, for he fought against what he regarded as untoward symptoms with indubitable energy. Had he had considerate counsellors, with whom he could have discussed matters without fear of being either laughed at or misunderstood, he might

have averted or postponed the encroachments of mania, but all who approached him had a fatal facility for unduly stimulating him and keeping his nerves on the raw. The unvarnished fact is that his presence on the throne of Bavaria had ceased to be desirable to certain people, who spared no pains to clear him out of the way.

Unfortunately, Ludwig played into their hands by his conduct and his mode of life. His love of solitude and hatred of conventionality were interpreted as signs of the malady which his enemies had determined he should suffer from. Afterwards the mania for building, which he undoubtedly developed and for which Bavaria is so thankful to him to-day—since it has proved a source of immense income to the country—exceeded all reasonable limits. But this was because his adversaries did his book-keeping. His income could not be traced, but his expenses were intentionally magnified and detailed. The intention was to make him out as virtually bankrupt. Had means been seriously sought to ease his embarrassed situation, they could easily have been obtained. But no one wished to help him; on the contrary, obstacles were perpetually put in his way with the express purpose, on the one hand, of "driving him silly," and, on the other, of enabling his foes to represent him as a madman dangerous to the public safety.

The conspiracy was admirably planned and engineered, and the only surprising thing is that it did not

succeed earlier, and that the King was allowed to drag on for something like twelve years an existence which had become irksome not only to Luitpold, " the wicked uncle," but also to those who, whilst admiring certain points of his character, as did Prince Bismarck, yet considered his removal necessary to the safety of the German Empire which had been built up with so much blood and at such terrible injustice. Probably, too, the divinity that doth hedge a King clung sufficiently to the person of Ludwig to make his enemies hesitate before daring to lay sacrilegious hands upon him.

CHAPTER XXII

CHURCH AND STATE

AFTER the war with France King Ludwig II. was a changed man. He had missed, as he knew too well, the one opportunity of his life and lamented it incessantly. Indeed, the irritation never deserted him and doubtless was, in part, contributory to the fell disease that was his undoing. He paid dearly for mistakes for which others were far more to blame than he was, even though it is impossible to exculpate him. Hence arose the misanthropy which latterly distinguished him.

Women were not so antipathetic. It was even alleged—though it seems problematical, to say the least—that had his cousin, the Duchess Sophie Charlotte, not been married to the Duke of Alençon, he would have tried to renew the engagement which he had broken without even offering a plausible reason for affronting the Duchess. As we know, she had consoled herself for her fiancé's faithlessness—a fact, be it said, in passing, he could not bring himself to forgive. Indeed, one of the strange features of an altogether strange story is that though Ludwig cherished resentment against the girl he so callously threw over and

against her parents, the latter as well as the immediate members of the family remained upon good and even affectionate terms with the King and never upbraided him for his fickleness. The Empress Elizabeth of Austria, in particular, preserved warm feelings of friendship—which might almost be called by another name—for her cousin, with whom she sympathised so thoroughly that, despite his ill treatment of her sister, she found excuses for him in her heart.

In general the younger branch of the House of Wittelsbach, to which the Empress and her sisters belonged, was on much better terms with the chief of their race than were his close relatives, the old Prince Luitpold and his sons, who had always coveted the Crown. The only other person whom Ludwig regarded affectionately was his cousin the Princess Gisela, wife of Prince Luitpold, who, as the eldest daughter of the Empress Elizabeth, was the object of the special attention of the King, who used to send her handsome presents and liked to have her about him, though towards the end of his life he shunned her also. Unfortunately for him his eccentricities became so notorious that they lent colour and probability to the malicious rumours his enemies so diligently circulated.

In spite of his loneliness Ludwig kept himself well informed as to what was going on around him, and his interest in the intellectual and political questions agitating Germany never flagged. It was the period of the great fight, the "Kulturkampf," between Bis-

marck on the one side and the Roman Catholic Church on the other. Public opinion was vastly excited, not only in Prussia, the chief scene of conflict, but also in the Southern States, where, owing to the large number of Roman Catholics, it was viewed with deepest interest and roused an opposition which, in the hands of a capable statesman, might have tried Bismarck to the uttermost.

By nature, taste and conviction, Ludwig was a most tolerant man. He detested religious controversy and held that schools ought not to be under Church control but be subject to the supervision of the State. The reforms which Bismarck and his colleague, Dr. von Falk, the Minister for Education in Prussia, wanted to introduce enlisted his sympathies, a fact which provoked the animosity of the extreme Ultramontanes, who attributed it to the influence of Dr. von Döllinger, whom he respected and esteemed to an uncommon degree, and whose name became so famous, because of his attitude to the dogma of Papal Infallibility at the Vatican Council, the promulgation of which, it will be remembered, all but caused a serious schism in the Roman Catholic Church.

Döllinger had been the King's teacher in childhood and early youth, and Ludwig never ceased to honour him. His religious ideas were partly inspired by those of the wise old man, whose authority in matters pertaining to the discipline of the Church was as great as it had been uncontested until he encountered the

Papal thunders and was excommunicated by Pius IX. The King of Bavaria, while not expressing in public his sentiments on the subject which was dividing the Roman Catholic world, yet was entirely in accord with Döllinger and lent his support throughout the stiff battle which the old theologian fought with an energy most surprising considering his years and frail health.

Some letters exchanged between the Monarch and the priest are of concern to us, inasmuch as they give the key to certain sides in Ludwig's character which are both interesting and unexpected, if we allow that nothing in his education had equipped him for the storms of religious quarrel. Take, for example, the letter to Döllinger on his birthday, before Papal Infallibility had been promulgated.

"My dear Canon von Döllinger,

"I had intended to call on you personally to express my good wishes on the occasion of your birthday, but have been prevented through a slight indisposition. I hope God will grant you many years of health and freshness of heart and mind, in order to enable you to pursue the struggle you have entered into for the honour of Religion and Science, and for the welfare of Church and State, and to carry it to a glorious end. Don't overtire yourself during that battle which is so earnest and so fraught with importance to the future, and remember that millions of people, full of confidence in you, look to you to save them from

the ever-growing power and influence of the Jesuits, and to secure the triumph of light over darkness. May God help you! I pray He may do so from the bottom of my soul. In repeating my best and sincerest wishes for your prosperity, I send you, my dear Canon von Döllinger, my friendliest greetings, and remain with the feelings of the most unshaken confidence,

"Your most kindly disposed King,

"LUDWIG.

"28th February, 1870."

One year later, after Döllinger had fallen under the ban of the Holy See and been excommunicated by the Church of which he had been one of the most distinguished members, the King wrote again, this time with even more affection and respect than before, and with the evident desire to make up somehow for all the old man had been compelled to endure.

"MY DEAR CANON DOCTOR VON DÖLLINGER,

"I cannot allow your birthday to pass without sending you, as proof of my kind feelings towards you, my best and warmest wishes. In common with the whole country, I feel proud to call you mine and to express my firm conviction that for years yet you will illuminate and adorn that branch of knowledge to which you have devoted your life, and continue to work for the benefit of the State and Church with devotion similar to that which you have ever exhibited towards the Throne. I need not add how greatly I

rejoiced at the very decided attitude you have taken up on that question of Papal Infallibility, nor how painfully I was impressed on learning that Abbot Haneberg had, against his own convictions, blindly submitted what he ought to have resisted until the end. Probably he did so out of a feeling of discouragement, but in my opinion it is a complete delusion as well as an unworthy action to submit officially to what one's conscience reproves in secret. I am delighted to see that I have never been mistaken in you, and to recall that I always said you were my Bossuet and he my Fénélon. In contrast to my feelings for him I am proud of you, who are one of the firmest supporters of our Church and have understood the true sense of our holy religion. I repeat once more, my dear Canon, the assurance of my kind feelings and send you my friendliest greetings,

"Your well-disposed King,

"LUDWIG.

"28th February, 1871."

One notices in this letter the Sovereign's remark on the subject of discouragement, a feeling to which he yielded entirely, after blaming it severely in other people. This small point suffices to show the change that had come over his moral character during the last years of his life, and to explain his attitude when the hour of peril struck for him, too.

In general Ludwig's leanings were against Ultramontanism in whatever shape and form it assumed,

but during the struggle which was a consequence of the policy adopted by the Prussian Government and later by the whole of Germany, with the exception of Austria, of course, in regard to the Roman Catholic Church, he decidedly supported Prince Bismarck, with whom the Bavarian Cabinet stood solid, following his leadership in all questions connected with the quarrel between the State and the Roman Catholic Church. This line, however, met with no sympathy either from the upper classes in Bavaria or from the peasants, and counted its supporters only among the middle classes and University students and professors. The Landtag, or Lower Chamber, also disapproved of it, and the Ministry, which was presided over by Dr. von Lutz, who was later to take a leading part in Ludwig's deposition and internment as a madman, found it most difficult to govern in presence of the Opposition and, more than once, was put in a minority on the vote. This incensed the King, and on one of these occasions (in 1883) he addressed to Dr. von Lutz the following letter, which he asked him to publish in the Press, and which gives his thoughts upon this important question of the quarrel between Church and State.

"My dear Minister von Lutz,

"I have followed with deep regret the various difficulties which, in the course of the last months, have been put in the way of my Ministry's work for the welfare of the country, and I feel it necessary to express

my firm expectation that you and your colleagues, whom I have appointed as advisers of the Crown, will go on defending the rights of my State as energetically as hitherto. In the matter of the relations between Church and State I have always protected the former, out of the conviction that it was my duty to do so, and I shall never abandon this policy or cease to respect the religious opinions of my subjects, in which I find guarantees for the maintenance of peace and order in the country. It is my wish that the religious wants of my people should be attended to. But I also want my Government now and in the future to oppose all the efforts made by certain persons to dispute the indubitable right of the State to supremacy, in the hope of creating an atmosphere of distrust and enmity between it and the Church. In expressing my wishes, I also convey to you and your colleagues my warm appreciation of your efforts in this most difficult question, together with my gratitude for your fidelity to my person and my Crown."

This was the last occasion on which the King of Bavaria personally interfered in a political issue, and, on this account, the letter demands record.

CHAPTER XXIII

SHADOWS OF COMING EVENTS

ONE of the greatest reproaches of the Prussian party was King Ludwig's indifference to military questions and his lack of interest in the Army. No one cared to reflect how painful it was to a man of fine feelings and extreme sensitiveness to be obliged to acknowledge that, though nominally the head of his Army, yet he was not allowed any say in its management, or even to address the soldiers as Bavarian soldiers because, forsooth, they had been transformed into Germans. This must have been the more galling, for he knew the men hated the Prussians just as much as he did himself.

Several curious instances of the latter sentiment could be quoted, apart from the fact that when they tried to incorporate Prussians in the Bavarian ranks, the former were so badly treated by their comrades that the attempt had to be abandoned. For instance, one day a prince of the royal house of Prussia, during an inspection of Bavarian regiments, asked a soldier to tell him who were the enemies of Germany abroad. The man replied at once, "The French." But when questioned further who were the enemies of Germany

within the country, instead of returning the anticipated answer, the "Socialists," he responded just as quickly, "Those pigs of Prussians, Your Highness." The anecdote is true and is very significant of the feeling of Southern Germans towards their Prussian conquerors.

But Ludwig's affectation of ignorance of all matters concerning the soldiers produced a bad impression upon the public, and was represented in an entirely false light by those who had an interest in making him unpopular, not only with the community, but especially with the soldiery which, it was feared, he might find a willing instrument in any attempt to recover his independence and that of his kingdom. In some extraordinary fashion he became aware of the wiles of his enemies, and realising the necessity of remaining in personal contact with his troops, he decided during the summer of 1875 to hold a review in Munich, to test the opinion of his people and to learn whether their former enthusiasm and affection had been at all affected by recent events.

Whatever his expectations, they were enormously surpassed. Not only his soldiers but also the inhabitants of the capital, along with immense numbers of people from the country, who flocked to Munich on hearing that they would at last have an opportunity of looking once more upon the features of their Sovereign, cheered him as he had never been cheered before, and demonstrated beyond doubt that he was still popular throughout Bavaria, and that though the German

Crown Prince came every autumn to hold manœuvres with the Bavarian troops, he was nevertheless a foreigner in their eyes and not a leader to whom they owed allegiance.

Perhaps a desire to show the future German Emperor that this was so may have had something to do with the King's sudden determination to emerge from the solitude in which his days were generally spent. His relations with his cousin had never been cordial since the latter's visit to Munich after the war with France, and, besides, he was annoyed at a few words which Prince Frederick had dropped at Versailles when the proclamation of the Empire was being discussed and which some busybody, bent on mischief, had repeated to the King. Ludwig, indeed, never missed a chance to show quite openly his feelings in regard to Prussia. When the aged Emperor wished to confer upon him the chain of the Order of the Black Eagle in the spring of 1872, and sent it to him by a special messenger, the King refused to receive the latter, in spite of the earnest entreaties of the Prussian Minister accredited to the Bavarian Court. When his advisers induced him at least to write and thank William I. for the honour, this took the form of a mere assurance that " he would be glad to receive the decoration which the Emperor had forwarded to him, but only at a later date, when he did not feel so tired. At present he was not equal to the exertion and could not fix a day for the ceremony."

We have already mentioned that the old Kaiser

always felt kindly disposed towards his nephew and bore him no animosity for his lack of interest in the restoration of the Empire. Ludwig had been the only prominent conscientious objector, and felt affronted whenever he heard himself spoken of as a German. " I am a Bavarian," was his protest, " and do not wish to be considered as anything else."

As time went on, his feelings on this point grew in intensity and became at last so well known that the German Crown Prince made no further attempts to overcome them and simply ignored the King. Though he often visited Munich it was always in a semi-incognito, and though he continually exchanged visits with the members of the Bavarian Royal Family, not once did he try to see the Monarch himself. Even the old Emperor became " fed up " with his perpetual efforts to win the affection of his refractory relative. In 1874 the two Sovereigns met for the last time at Munich railway station, whither Ludwig had repaired to welcome his uncle on his way to Gastein, but afterwards William I. avoided passing through Bavaria except when under the veil of absolute incognito. So far as the rulers of the two countries were concerned, the breach between them was at last definite and complete, and was never healed as long as Ludwig II. was King.

In marked contrast to his dislike of the Hohenzollerns were the King's feelings towards his beautiful cousin, the Empress Elizabeth of Austria. We have seen something of this before and shall witness more

of the relationship. She, too, was a Wittelsbach, and their characters had much in common. Elizabeth was equally fond of retirement, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot." She was a great reader and inclined —God knows why!—to look upon humanity with the morbid contempt with which Ludwig regarded it. She was the only woman whom he had ever got on with, and up to the last, when everybody else, including his mother, was kept at a distance, the Empress's visits were always welcome. For hours they sat together in deep conversation, exchanging thoughts and impressions freely and without the restraint of ceremonial life.

Elizabeth used to spend part of each summer in her beloved Bavarian mountains, and never failed to visit either Hohenschwangau or Berg, sometimes unexpectedly, but always bringing radiance to the sombre recluse. She exercised a strong influence over Ludwig's mind and soul, and when the dark shadows of insanity closed upon him, she alone could soothe him. It was partly owing to her efforts that the extreme measures finally adopted were not resorted to sooner. On the fatal day when Ludwig met his end the Empress is said to have been waiting for him on the other side of the lake of Starnberg (as we shall relate in a later chapter), with carriage and horses ready to carry him away to Tyrol. She had contrived a plan of escape, which unhappily failed by one of those chances, in which it is impossible not to see the finger of Providence.

As for the King's mother, his relations with her became cooler and cooler as time passed. The Queen Dowager had never understood his character and, on his part, he had often been wounded by her want of sympathy. Towards the end he was influenced against her by malice aforethought by those who did not wish them to see much of each other lest the Queen might prove an inconvenient witness when they put her son out of the way. Though she had not comprehended the temperament of her firstborn, she would never have been privy to any attempt on his person or his peace of mind. The diabolical project was, therefore, conceived of estranging them from each other, and this was effectually accomplished. Yet the last time mother and son met in this world, their interview was one of the most touching they had ever held.

It was on the occasion of the Queen's sixtieth birthday, and Ludwig—who for years had never remembered the day—suddenly took it in his head to visit Hohenschwangau where his mother resided, and congratulate her personally. To the great surprise of every one, he arrived late at night, when the gates of the castle were closed, and immediately sought his overjoyed parent. He remained twenty-four hours with the Queen, but hardly spoke to any of her ladies and attendants, though most deferential and even tender to her Majesty. When they parted he exacted a promise from his mother to come and see him at the castle of Linderhof, where he was staying, much to the regret and annoyance of those

who would have preferred, for the security of their plans, to keep the two apart for ever.

Nor were they to meet any more. A few months after this unexpected visit to Hohenschwangau, the Emperor of Austria at the instance of his Consort, who was alarmed for her cousin's safety, wrote to the Queen Dowager, urging her most seriously to do all she could to get her son to abandon his habits of solitude and to show himself in public, because most alarming reports as to his sanity were being circulated. The unhappy mother wrote to Ludwig begging him to receive her, as she had something of the utmost importance to communicate. He fixed an interview in three days' time and she sent her horses and carriages to Hohenschwangau. She was already on her way there herself, when she was met by a mounted groom, who told her she had better return as she could not see the King, "who allows no one to come to him." One may imagine the consternation of the poor woman. Next day Ludwig wired that he "was very sorry not to be able to receive her, but that he was suffering from acute toothache and could see no one, not even his beloved mother."

Of course she knew nothing of the dastardly feature of the affair. Ludwig had been deliberately told that his mother had sent a message that she would only come to Hohenschwangau, if she were allowed to bring with her a certain gentleman whom the King hated but who enjoyed her Majesty's favours. Thus the

breach, always on the point of imminence between the Dowager Queen and her son, was widened by foul means. The conspiracy was slowly unfolding itself, and it was not a long time before people were informed that the King of Bavaria had isolated himself not only from the world but also from all his relatives. No one suspected for a single moment that he was *being* isolated, unawares and unknown to himself, from all who could and would have helped him in the hour of his need.

CHAPTER XXIV

CASTLES IN THE AIR

DURING the years which had elapsed since Ludwig's early infatuation for Wagner, the King's feelings had undergone a considerable change in regard to the friend of his youth. When not irritated or excited by his unscrupulous entourage he exhibited some common-sense and understood that he ought, out of affection for his people, to give up his intimacy with the composer, of whose intrigue with Frau Cosima von Bülow he was, as we have seen, aware. But though he no longer cared to have Wagner constantly about him, nevertheless he consulted him on grave occasions, when the latter always advised him in a sense favourable to Prussian interests.

Wagner was essentially the kind of man, as the French say, *manger à deux râteliers*. He wanted money above everything; not for its intrinsic value, but because it alone could supply power and the various luxuries to which he had become used, and which the infatuation of his admirers provided. Ludwig continued until his death to pay him a yearly pension, and gave him large sums for his famous theatre at Bayreuth. He even consented to attend the first

representation of the "Nibelungen," and, notwithstanding that the German Emperor, together with other princes, was also present, did not allow his usual shyness to overcome him. He had driven from his castle of Chiemsee direct to Bayreuth, where he witnessed the performance from a box, which did not prevent him from being the object of enthusiastic ovations on the part of the public, outside and inside the theatre. He appeared to be very ill and refused to see any one, with the exception of Wagner, with whom he spoke for a few moments, but though the composer begged him to honour him with a visit to his house, he refused and left Bayreuth the same night.

His affection for the musician had disappeared, but his admiration for his work remained intact. In 1881 he accepted the rôle of patron of the Wagner Cycle at Bayreuth and directed that the chorus and orchestra of the Court Theatre of Munich should be for two months each year at the disposal of his friend; and after he had heard the first performance of "Parsifal," he expressed the wish to listen to it again, but this time *solus cum solo.* This was the first of these representations, which he liked so much, at which he was the only spectator and which gave rise to so much talk. He showed himself more enthusiastic than ever for the music of Wagner, but when during the last visit which the latter paid to Munich towards the end of 1882, he asked to be received by the King, his request was refused on the plea of ill health.

On the 13th of February, 1883, Wagner breathed his last in Venice. A beautiful wreath of flowers was laid upon his coffin in the name of the Monarch, one of whose representatives attended the funeral ceremonies at Bayreuth; but, as has already been related, Ludwig did not grant his widow the audience which she craved, and after that day never again mentioned Wagner's name to any one.

But by one of those unaccountable freaks of his tumultuous fancy, music, which he had loved so much, grew hateful after Wagner had passed away. He caused the pianos in his castles to be locked up and covered with black crape, and the Opera, which had been one of his greatest enjoyments, was never more visited by him, either in Munich or elsewhere. His private band was dismissed and strict orders were issued that no music was ever to be performed or heard in the vicinity of his apartments.

This did not mean that he had ceased to appreciate art and artists. He had a keen sense of the beautiful and would have liked everything around him to bear an impress of absolute loveliness. His mania for building only proceeded from that longing for unattainable beauty which was for ever haunting him. He could admire a splendid picture with similar pleasure to that with which he read a fine book. Few men have comprehended better than he did the grandeur of literature, and there was hardly a volume worthy of notice with which he was not familiar, and, what is more, which he

did not understand in the exact sense in which the author had written it. Sometimes he used to record his impressions of books, and those who have perused these appreciations say they were remarkable, not only for the sound judgment displayed in the criticisms but also for the appropriate language in which they were expressed. But after his death all these papers, which would have been invaluable to the serious writer of his life, were burnt by order of the Prince Regent, who was anxious the world should not learn that the man whom he had imprisoned as a madman could write and think sanely, soberly and with a touch of genius.

Ludwig also followed with the keenest interest the course of modern literature throughout Europe. He was an excellent linguist and read, in their original language, the leading writers in England, France and Italy, as well as in Germany. His interest extended to the circumstances of the authors whose books he had enjoyed, and he often caused inquiries to be made as to their private means, and if he discovered that these were indifferent, he often sent them anonymously large sums of money. In general his generosity was unbounded, even in regard to those members of his family whom he knew to be directly hostile to him. The presents he distributed among his uncles and cousins were of so enormous value that they were cited as proof of his unsoundness of mind. Prince Luitpold and his sons and daughters, however, never declined the gifts on that account.

Extravagant Ludwig undoubtedly was, but this was the fault of others rather than his own; for he had never been taught the value of money—during his nonage he had been paid a beggarly pittance—and when he suddenly found himself sole master of an income of several millions of florins, which must have appeared quite inexhaustible, he "let himself go." His inclination to achieve a great name in the history of his country prompted the idea of building castles that should become wonders of the world. Moreover, in this way could he not satisfy his wish to do something for his beloved Bavaria?

Real authority over his native land he did not possess; it had all been filched from him; and he had come to learn the shameful truth that he was but a fifth (and therefore useless) wheel in the car of his State. He must occupy, however, his ever-restless brain, and so he started building with wonted energy. The duty of beautifying the old homes of his ancestors appealed to him, and having no notion of the money which would be required to realise his dreams, he naturally went on spending and spending. Had he been advised to retain a competent architect and surveyor all would have been well, for his outlay, would *ex hypothesi*, have been safeguarded at every turn. But this did not answer the purpose of the plotters. Accordingly he piled up a mountain of indebtedness, and when the naked truth was at last revealed he learned that his money was gone and, what was of vastly greater

importance, his credit as well! It was a cruel dodge, to hoist the poor King with his own petard, and it was worked remorselessly with diabolical ingenuity and perseverance.

For Hohenschwangau, where he had spent his youth, Ludwig entertained for a long time a romantic affection. Suddenly it occurred to him to "go one better" and build something still more beautiful, on a high mountain near the old home of his race. In 1869 was laid the first stone of Neuschwanstein, the grandest of the grand castles he built and perhaps the finest. From whatever side one beholds it, as it proudly rises from a landscape of surpassing beauty, it appears splendid and artistically magnificent. It is not so rich as Linderhof or Chiemsee, and looks more like a feudal stronghold than anything else, but it is romantically attractive, and one can quite understand how it became the King's favourite residence until the end. It was at Neuschwanstein that the penultimate act in the drama of his life occurred, and it was thence that he was violently kidnapped to Berg and—the still waters of Starnberg.

After the war of 1870 and its many disillusions, Ludwig became more and more engrossed with his building enterprises. They provided a personal and undivided interest to which, as he thought, nightmare Prussia could not object. He resumed operations at Neuschwanstein and started at the same time to transform his father's shooting-box in the Alps, not far from

Oberammergau, into the fairy-like palace of Linderhof. This was a small building, but its ten State rooms were crowded with pictures and statuary, exquisite French furniture of the eighteenth century, and a rare collection of china. The hangings, curtains and draperies were fabricated of heavy silks embroidered in gold, and the chandeliers were also of massive gold. But the finest thing about Linderhof are its wonderful gardens, the like of which can be found nowhere else, where one can see a blue azure grotto, arranged after the celebrated one at Capri, of which it is a perfect imitation.

Yet the King soon got weary of its magnificence, and set about constructing the gigantic mass of stones called Herrenchiemsee, intended to be a reproduction of the palace of Versailles and never finished. During the years of its building he made several journeys to France, in the strictest incognito, and spent weeks at Versailles, which had captivated him and which, he said, was the only palace worthy of a Sovereign. He had always admired Louis XIV., and, as time went on, his cult—for such it amounted to—of "le Roi Soleil" increased, until it became a mania. He must needs own a castle in which he might revive the old French etiquette so dear to the Bourbons, and, as a first step towards its establishment in Bavaria, he began an edifice compared with which the one raised by the Grand Monarch should seem small and insignificant.

Herrenchiemsee consists of a building one hundred and ten yards long, with two side wings, and is entirely

built of white and black marble. In the different apartments may be seen portraits of French Kings and Queens and the lilies of the Bourbons. The sixteen State rooms are called after those of Versailles, and the long Mirror gallery is a replica of the one which witnessed the glories of the effete French monarchy and was, later, the scene of the proclamation of the German Empire. It is lighted up by fifty-two chandeliers, containing something like two thousand candles, which the King caused to be lit during the solitary meals which he partook of in the midst of the horrible splendour he had created.

Regularly, on the 29th of every September, Ludwig went to Herrenchiemsee and stayed there until the 8th of October. He generally arrived at midnight and was met at the lakeside station by a golden gondola with two sailors, who rowed him to the island on which the castle stood. There, during that one week, he saw no one but the architects at work on the palace, and then he disappeared as mysteriously as he had come!

So long as the King lived no one was ever permitted to visit any of his castles, but since his death they have been thrown open, and tourists and others flocked to them before the outbreak of the European War. The entrance fees helped to pay Ludwig's debts and now constitute a substantial addition to the State income. Linderhof, Neuschwanstein, and Herrenchiemsee are considered among the foremost places of

interest in Germany, and long after the present heads of the dynasty of Wittelsbach have been forgotten, will help to preserve the name and story of the Idealist King, who planned their magnificence, and then disappeared like a Phantom.

CHAPTER XXV

IN ILL ODOUR WITH THE PEOPLE

IN the course of the year 1880 Bavaria celebrated the seven hundredth anniversary of the accession of the dynasty of the Wittelsbachs. Great preparations had been made to commemorate the event, and the whole nation expected the King to be present. Suddenly Ludwig issued an order that no festivities were to take place and published a proclamation to his people declaring it to be his wish that, instead of spending their money on illuminations, fireworks and the like, they would devote it to some charitable purpose. The feeling was appreciated in some quarters, but the fact that he did not emerge from his retreat on such a unique occasion produced an unpleasant impression, and reproaches were addressed to him by many who had hitherto defended him from the attacks levelled against him at Prussian instigation.

This was the second time that Ludwig had seriously disappointed his people. A few years before, when the province of Pfalz celebrated the jubilee of its reunion with Bavaria, the King had promised to attend, but sent an excuse at the last moment on the plea of ill health, a plea which did not prevent him from start-

ing on the very same day for Switzerland to visit his friend Wagner. It was said later that it was with the view of alienating their affections that Wagner had hit upon the device of a visit at that particular time.

Of course, it is impossible to say whether this charge were true or false, but there is no *prima facie* evidence of its unlikelihood. For one thing Wagner bore a big grudge against the Bavarians, who had obliged him to leave Munich in disgrace; and he could not but have felt delighted at anything likely to cause them displeasure or annoyance. Then, again, in spite of his so-called friendship for Ludwig, he was indignant at the King's having deserted him instead of standing by him. These two forces acting conjointly might have moved Wagner to a line of action which must infallibly involve the King with his people.

If the stars in their courses seemed to fight against Ludwig with painful persistency, it cannot be gainsaid that, too frequently, he was his own worst enemy. As time went on and similar mistakes were repeated, his popularity began to suffer, if not among the rank and file, which still worshipped him as it had done from the very first, at least among the higher classes and the aristocracy, who blamed the solitude in which he lived and who desired him to mix a little more with the world and show himself to his subjects, to whom he was fast becoming merely *nomen et nominis umbra ;* a King of fairy tale who lives in a palace, but is forbidden to come out of it lest evil befall him.

Needless to say, the Prussian party made much of the blundering policy of Ludwig, although he probably honestly believed he could attend to matters of State without holding any communication with his Ministers. Rumours without number were put about concerning his eccentricities and health. It was even maliciously said that he was suffering from some disease that had affected his appearance and necessitated his retirement from society. There was not one word of truth in any of these allegations, but Ludwig's strange conduct lent them some colour among folk who did not know him.

Nevertheless, in spite of all that has been related to the contrary, Ludwig tried to discharge his duties as Sovereign, though he may have gone about them in rather an extraordinary fashion. The routine of an existence where business and State affairs stood on the highest plane was repugnant to him, but this did not mean that he shirked his duties or even occasionally forgot them. Later, some lapses may have occurred at times when he was thoroughly wearied and exhausted. Then he drifted towards an inevitable doom which he did not feel strong enough to fight against.

Of course, he did not lead a healthy life, but it would have been comparatively easy to cure him had any one seriously taken him in hand soon enough. Reviewing his career one is startled at the many foolish things he did, things which his adversaries found it practicable to call madness. If one inquire

how it came to pass that none of his medical attendants drew attention to the pernicious effects of his artificial life, the melancholy answer seems to be either that they wished to see the throne vacated or else felt too timid to cross his fancies. His Ministers accepted his vagaries with an indifference that must certainly be described as culpable.

At the beginning of his reign Ludwig attended with great zeal and due diligence to matters of State and punctually performed the functions of his rank, but after a few years he contracted habits that clashed with the methodical discharge of duty. For instance, he was never visible in the morning and signed all papers at night, often refusing to see the Minister who could have explained the import of documents submitted to his approval. Moreover, he did not care to work in a room set apart for this purpose and, during the summer especially, liked to do so in the open air, when he ordered costly carpets to be brought into the parks or gardens, along with chairs and a table upon which he insisted on a large wreath of flowers being laid opposite to the place where he was to sit. Then he allowed his private secretary to present the papers he had to look through, after which he dismissed him with a celerity which plainly pointed to a perfunctory perusal of documents, many of which really demanded prolonged examination which they seldom if ever got. As a rule, however, a King's Messenger left Munich every evening with the documents that had to be

submitted to the Sovereign, and returned to the capital next morning with the Royal signatures. In this manner State business did not necessarily suffer from the King's seclusion, but the world did not understand that such was the case and blamed Ludwig for neglect of duty.

It will be readily believed that the lot of a King's private secretary through whose hands everything had to pass was not a particularly happy or enviable one. He was often held responsible for things he could not help, or in which he had had no part; besides, he was made, on the one hand, the scapegoat of Ludwig's sins and mistakes by public opinion, and, on the other, was obliged to bear the brunt of his Majesty's ill humour or fits of deep despondency and pessimism. He never knew when his sleep should be disturbed by a Royal command or letter to which he had to attend at once, and very often he was called to account for some stray word spoken without any afterthought of the significance that might be attached to it by a man of Ludwig's perfervid imagination. Really what the King required was the faithful attendance of a disinterested official who should secure the Royal interests of his own initiative. As it happened, the man who occupied the difficult position half of confidant and half of adviser, and who was called the King's private secretary, Herr von Eisenhart, instead of safeguarding his master's affairs, placed them in jeopardy by his Prussian sympathies and his endeavours to persuade Ludwig to

enter into the spirit of Prussian policy, and subordinate the welfare of Bavaria to that of Prussia and the Hohenzollern dynasty.

One of the King's favourite residences was the castle of Hohenschwangau, where he used to spend several months every year, until the building of Neuschwanstein in its vicinity was completed. At the former he passed the winter, when he would drive out every night in the beautiful woods in a sumptuous sledge, accompanied by torch-bearers on horseback to light the way. This was considered an eccentric whim, but, surely, it was harmless and need not have been the subject of complaint. His taste proceeded partly from dislike of crowds and partly from an attempt to win the peace and solitude which he could not obtain by day at any other of his castles and which his enervated constitution required.

Whenever he happened to be in Munich, which he avoided as much as possible, he drove daily to the park called the "English Garden," where he walked alone, with his hat drawn over his eyes and where no one was allowed to enter until he had left. He had a morbid fear of assassination, and for this reason was generally escorted by a detachment of police, a circumstance which did not tend to make him popular with the townsfolk, who considered it as an affront on their loyalty and affection, and resented it accordingly. A combination of unlucky circumstances caused Ludwig to be misunderstood and to misunderstand his subjects.

For instance, he was blamed for his demeanour in public, which was declared to be far too haughty and proud. But the truth was that he had naturally an uncouth and unsteady walk, which he tried to disguise by affecting a certain stiffness in his bearing, which was pronounced to be pride and a contempt of mankind. Then as to his habit of holding himself at a considerable distance from any person with whom he happened to be speaking. This was really due to his bad teeth, a defect he did not like people to notice because he had the reputation of being the handsomest Monarch in Europe.

Usually he ate by himself in his study, seated in a high-backed, solemn-looking chair at a table that was brought in for the meal and taken away as soon as he had finished. He was seldom punctual, and sometimes his dinner had to wait for hours before he would sit down to it, his procrastination being the despair of cooks and servants. He ate quickly, hardly giving himself time enough to masticate properly, but that he drank to excess was an absolute slander, for he was very sober and hardly ever touched any wine but light hock or champagne freely mixed with water, in which violet flowers had been scattered. And though he always had a glass of brandy at his bedside of a night, it was generally found untouched the next morning.

Ludwig had no vulgar vices and, with all his follies and faults, was truly kingly in everything he said

or did, and especially in his unbounded generosity. Nothing pleased him better than to make presents to all around him, and one of his greatest delights at Hohenschwangau was personally to superintend the ornamentation of the fine tree which was lighted in the big hall of the castle every Christmas eve and to which every tenant on the estate, including the meanest labourers with their families, was invited. The sums he distributed in charities and gifts were not so objectionable as those he squandered on those who made it their business to exploit his kind heart. After his death many a poor man and woman missed the help he had given to them in secret. He never refused a service, never listened unmoved to any tale of woe, and it was only after he had passed away from a world that altogether misjudged him, that justice was done to his many real and great qualities which the hateful and envious had denied him throughout his lifetime.

CHAPTER XXVI

TOUCHING THE KING'S TASTES

LUDWIG'S artistic tendencies have been widely discussed. It is certain that he imagined himself a gifted man and firmly believed it was his high destiny to transform German art. But—and this is a point which Germans refuse to admit in their appreciations of his character—he did not in the least care for that art which his compatriots proclaimed to be the only pure one upon earth. His tastes were not Teutonic but French, his ideals the productions of the eighteenth century in France. His ambition was to remodel German art after the French fashion. Although he always liked artists about him, he rarely allowed foreign ones to be introduced to him, owing to a desire to make his influence felt in questions where German art was concerned and to deliver it from the heaviness which was its distinctive feature.

Of the theatre he was amazingly fond, but there was a rich vein of selfishness in his nature which impelled him to see danger to art if its manifestations were to be open to all and sundry. This explains why he had the famous representations of his favourite musical and dramatic pieces performed for himself alone in an

empty house. There was something uncanny in his passion for opera. Always he was loud in praise of artists whose voice and talent appealed to him, exaggerating his appreciation and thus giving people occasion to say that his mind was not properly balanced. For instance, when the tenor Nachbaur, one of his prime favourites, fell ill, the King wrote that " he must take care of himself, and of his ' divine ' voice," adding in a postscript, " I ask you to do so, I the King who never ask anything of anyone." At another time he wrote to the same singer, " We are both enemies of everything that is vulgar and bad, and we delight in all that is pure and clean. For this reason we ought to remain true and sincere friends throughout life."

Of course, the recipients of such letters did not scruple to show them to their friends. This was gall and wormwood to the proud Bavarian aristocrats who already looked askance at the King for his neglect of their privileges and themselves, and could not forgive him admitting into his intimacy persons whom, in their lofty way, they considered as of no importance. Often Ludwig declined to admit into his presence those who had the undoubted right of audience, whilst he saw almost daily actors, painters, and singers. This studied neglect naturally engendered powerful animosities. Great anger was aroused when it became known that the tenor Vogl was occasionally summoned of nights to sing before the King some of his favourite airs, after the performance being driven home in one

of the royal carriages with a valet in attendance. Again, when all the actors who ever played on the stage of the Royal Theatre of Munich received from Ludwig splendid gifts of costly jewels and works of art of inestimable value, his extravagance caused considerable displeasure. Yet, even if we grant that the expenditure was at least useless, at any rate it did not degrade the royal dignity which Ludwig had ever rated so high. Probably he was conscious that his familiarity with persons who, like all badly brought up Germans, ignored the meaning of the word "discretion," was bound to create difficulties in the future as well as enmities in the present, and he deliberately preferred to take the risk.

But it was not only dramatic art Ludwig II. cared for. He also appreciated fine paintings, though understanding very little about them. He had a keen eye for beauty of conception and colouring, just as an educated traveller appreciates the wonderful tints of an Egyptian sunset. He knew a fine thing when he saw it, but could not have explained the nature of his feelings save in the most general terms. But, surely, the King was not alone in that respect. If he posed as a critic, it was not either a formidable or a rare offence. In regard to historical pictures, the first thing he remarked was whether the figures were dressed according to the time in which they lived or were garbed and grouped after the rules of etiquette. When asked to view a picture representing some scene in Bavarian history, he severely censured the artist for

daring to paint the ladies-in-waiting upon the Queen fanning themselves and talking with each other in her presence, and he grew so indignant that he actually threatened to have the work consigned to the flames. He was only appeased by a promise that the picture would be subjected to drastic revision in the directions he had indicated.

When the painter Ille was at work on five large canvases for the castle of Neuschwanstein, the subject of which consisted in scenes from "Lohengrin," Ludwig instructed his private secretary to write about different alterations he wished made in the composition with suggestions as to what he would prefer. Thus the letter ran: "The King orders me to tell you that he would like the attitude of the Emperor to be altered. Then, again, if it be technically possible, he would wish either the morning or the evening sun to light the figure of the Archangel Michael, and he asks you also to consider whether the head of the swan is not too large, and his breast, as it rests on the water, not too small. The King has seen swans at Hohenschwangau from his earliest childhood, and thinks that yours is not drawn quite in accord with nature."

Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown. The trifling attention which the Sovereign bestowed on the works of the artists he befriended was objected to, and it was said that he wasted far too much time on bagatelles instead of spending it in serious study of the necessities and welfare of his subjects. It was ridicu-

lously complained that his thoughts were centred on matters of no importance to the material development of Bavaria, and he was reminded that he would do better to turn his mind to politics or the economic conditions of his people.

Unquestionably no King—neither Ludwig nor another—has any right to devote himself to the pursuit of the fine arts, to the exclusion of matters of national import. He owes it to the nation over which he rules that he shall not be solely swayed by his private fancies. Still, had Ludwig been a private person of great wealth, there can be little doubt but that he would have been acclaimed a genius. But Monarchs have no right to be geniuses except in politics, and this was the one subject which the unfortunate Bavarian Sovereign did not care for and which was even detestable to him. He considered that the time he gave up to the things of the State might have been better employed in reading a classic, or listening to beautiful music, and he loved to be the patron of authors and artists and the like who were "down on their luck."

His taste for books, as we have seen, was quite remarkable. He used to read every new work, as well as the well-thumbed favourites which he liked to have handy to take up when he felt "so disposed." Whenever he travelled his servants had instructions to pack up his favourites and display them at once in the rooms which he was to occupy, so that he might find them within reach if need be. He suffered from sleeplessness

during the last years of his life, and then it was a solace for his nerves to read aloud passages from his cherished poets and writers, which he repeated over and over again, until he had learned them by heart. He had a wonderful memory, and sometimes could indicate the page upon which a sentence which had struck him was printed, though several years might have passed since he first read it. French literature he doted on, especially the authors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whom he stoutly proclaimed to be superior to all others. He had a perfect knowledge of English, Italian and German writers and, long before the craze for Russian literature seized the world, had read and appreciated Tolstoy, Tourguéniev and Dostoieffsky, the last of whom specially engrossed his attention, perhaps because he, too, was not a well-balanced man and was subject, like Ludwig, to fits and starts in which he could not give an exact account of what he was doing or thinking.

I have mentioned the theatrical performances which, at Ludwig's command, were given in the Royal Theatre of Munich for his sole benefit. They have often been quoted as evidence of a deranged mind or a depraved taste. It cannot be denied that they constituted a form of eccentricity of fancy which, to say the least, was singular and in itself far from laudable. But it must not be forgotten that Ludwig was of an exceedingly jealous disposition, and did not care that anyone in the world should enjoy what he enjoyed, or possess

what he had not. Besides, he was not at all the kind of man who wears his heart upon his sleeve. He hated the idea of showing his feelings in public, or of allowing the crowds to guess what was going on in his mind or in his soul. For him a dramatic performance was something sacred, and he could not restrain his emotions whilst witnessing one. For this reason he must see it alone; strangers must not notice his various moods. He was so accustomed to his own way that it did not cross his mind that people might object to his having a whole theatre lighted up and a staff of artists inconvenienced for his sole and exclusive benefit. The opposition which this whim of his provoked, as well as the criticisms to which it gave rise, filled him with pained surprise, but at last he was compelled to forgo this monstrously selfish pleasure, owing to the anger it excited among the inhabitants of Munich, who could not understand the dog-in-the-manger sentiment at the bottom of it.

In all likelihood we shall do little violence to fact, if we ascribe the origin of this craze to Wagner, who, during the winter of 1864–65, arranged in the Royal Theatre of Munich, a concert at which the King was the only listener. Suppose his humour gratified and the rest will follow. At any rate afterwards he liked to go over from the castle of Berg to town whenever a full-dress rehearsal of a new piece or opera was to take place. This developed later into the mania we have been considering, but the practice might never

have occurred to him had not Wagner's performance suggested it in the first place.

In truth, in all Ludwig's thoughts and deeds that savoured of the abnormal, one traces the hand of that teacher to whom he had looked up with some approach to reverence, and in whom he had seen the ideal of his youthful enthusiasms. Wagner was not the King's mascot. Popular opinion indeed denounced him as his evil genius, as the villain of the tragedy, and the Bavarian people thought they had reason to accuse him of their beloved Monarch's downfall. Wagner's so-called love of art rested on a sensuous and material basis and had nothing noble, nothing elevated about it. Those who say that he was not directly guilty of the final catastrophe refuse to acknowledge the shameful facts because they ill consort with their ceaseless efforts to deify the musician to whom Germany owes "Dic Meistersinger," the "Nibelungen," and "Parsifal."

CHAPTER XXVII

A POLICY OF PINPRICKS

ABOUT this period Prince Bismarck's attention was drawn to the King of Bavaria, who, as his emissaries reported, was becoming every day more pronounced in his hatred of Prussia and the Prussians. This did not please the great Chancellor. Personally he would have preferred to let things slide, in Bavaria as elsewhere in Germany, into submission to the *fait accompli* which time is sure to bring. Foresight taught him that once the Bavarian Army was placed under the command of Prussian generals and modelled after the Prussian system, the State itself would soon become Imperial and pass out of the control of its titular chief. He meant to convert Ludwig as well as other German princes into vassals of the Empire, but saw no need to rub his designs in or even to show his hand. Ludwig's eccentricities did not worry him; at least not until certain things were revealed which gave another current to his thoughts and caused some anxiety concerning the wisdom of the policy he had pursued since the peace of Frankfort.

Even then he would not be party to violent measures against a Sovereign for whom he entertained a sincere

regard. For Bismarck belonged to the old-fashioned school which considered the persons of reigning Monarchs as sacred, and it would, therefore, be repulsive to him to employ force against a being in whom his feudal principles saw the Anointed of the Lord and not a political adversary. His few relations with Ludwig had always been excellent, and the King had ever found the Chancellor obliging and conciliatory whenever he had occasion to consult him.

Bismarck's ideal, which he kept profoundly secret, was to strip the small German States of every scrap of their former independence, but at the same time to load their rulers with honours and dignities and pay them the utmost deference. His hope was to induce these kings and princes and dukes to imagine that it was they who, out of love for Germany, had created the Empire, and that the new era, instead of lowering their prestige and influence would considerably enhance it, by making them the equals of the German Emperor, who was their President and not their Lord and master. So long as William I. was alive it was easy to take this line, because the old man never took kindly to the Imperial dignity and would rather have remained King of Prussia. But with the Crown Prince it was far otherwise. They called him " Frederick the Noble " after his accession, but " noble " was hardly the fitting word. He was a strong Imperialist, bent on impressing the reigning Princes, Kings, and Grand Dukes that they were but the " Peers " of the Empire.

This accounts for the antipathy which the two men—Ludwig and Frederick—cherished for each other, for in the Bavarian King the Prussian Crown Prince rightly recognised a resolute adversary of his ideas and policy. Had not Frederick availed himself of his position as General commanding the Bavarian troops and come to Munich so often Ludwig might not have disliked him and Prussian politics so heartily. For though Ludwig was by nature lazy and irritable, he might have forgotten, in course of time, his unpleasant situation after the war with France, if he had not been reminded of it at every turn. His Ministers were Prussian at heart, his Court was under Prussian influence, and his family was eager to see him make way for Prince Luitpold, who was so desirous of usurping his nephew's place that he lent himself to every intrigue, and became Bismarck's obedient, humble servant in the lively expectation of favours to come. He and others employed themselves in exasperating Ludwig by constantly wounding his sensibilities, and making him feel that, though ostensibly King, yet all power had passed out of his hands into those of Prussia, of which Bavaria had become a province and dependency.

These intrigues notwithstanding, Ludwig never showed that they disturbed his equanimity. He could not be roused to decisive action, and accepted the *status quo* without demur—at least public and official. He would not, it is true, go to Berlin, or exhibit anything beyond bare civility to any member of the Prussian

Royal House, but, on the other hand, he bowed to the inevitable and even pretended to be anxious for the welfare of that German Empire of which he had been lured into hoping he might, at some time, be chosen the Head. He believed, strange though it may seem, in Bismarck's honesty and did not think him capable of wilful deceit. The Prussian statesman knew this and shut his ears to the expressions of hostility which Ludwig occasionally let drop. He was too big a man to bother about trifles, and he considered such things as trifles. Others, however, were of a different opinion, partly on account of false reports from Munich, from sources which, though *prima facie* trustworthy, yet were partisans of the ambitious projects of old Prince Luitpold of Bavaria. Once they were merely staunchly Prussian; now Luitpold had nobbled them and they had to manage Bismarck somehow.

Luitpold, Prussian and Imperialist though he was, yet had meanly done his very best to excite his nephew against Berlin and the Hohenzollern dynasty which the uncle described to Ludwig as the usurpers of his privileges and rights. But Ludwig had not seriously inclined to hear these things from *that* quarter, much to Luitpold's disgust, because he knew very well that without Prussian backing he could not supplant the King. And he could hardly hope for such help so long as Ludwig maintained his attitude of resignation, his pose of drift. Frictions would not even arise on military questions, because, for one thing, these had never

interested Ludwig II., and now that the command of his army had been withdrawn from him, he had ceased to care for it and abandoned it to its fate and to its Prussian leaders.

It was a dreadful *impasse*. Somehow Ludwig must be made angry enough to show an independent spirit. Merely to keep on circulating reports of his detestation of Prussia did not suffice. It might be true, but how could they prove it? Where was their evidence of their King's atrocious taste? Prove that this was a living sentiment and animated him to translate it into deeds, and it would become relatively easy to represent his conduct as a danger to the community and to place him under restraint, on the plea either that he was hopelessly insane or that as a source of peril to his own kingdom he also inferentially jeopardised the German Empire. Could the plotters but establish the fact that he had been conspiring against the security of the Empire, then the rest would follow as the night the day. Bismarck would be compelled to assent to a fundamental change in the *personnel* of the Bavarian monarchy. This, therefore, became Prince Luitpold's one aim in life.

On a review of a situation that can never recur, it is impossible to acquit Prince Luitpold of personal motives. He sincerely believed that the presence of his nephew upon the throne of his fathers might bring not only misfortune but also ruin to his family. He was not rich, had three sons and one daughter, and

it seems probable that he was really alarmed at Ludwig's large expenditure on the Civil List. Moreover, to be quite frank, Luitpold was a miser and would have liked half of the royal income to be put aside, as had been his brother's custom, for the benefit of the Wittelsbachs. He overlooked the fact that his nephew, a bachelor, had no reason to interest himself in the financial welfare of his relatives, who had, by the way, never been deferential or kindly disposed towards him. But this was precisely the one thing which the future Prince Regent of Bavaria refused to recognise, and out of his desire to accumulate the large income of which the King disposed, arose the conspiracy in which he was to play the leading part and which, not to Ludwig's misfortune only but also to that of the whole of Bavaria, was to succeed so thoroughly.

Be it admitted that the King was not entirely sane, his eccentricities were never of that nature which should expose his country or his family to danger. His enormous debt could have been defrayed in course of time. Arrangements might easily have been entered into with the creditors, who would never have shown themselves irreconcilable had they not been instigated thereto by Ludwig's personal enemies. Aware of the extent of his resources, Ludwig must have been puzzled to know how they had vanished so very completely. For, at a moment's notice, he was told he was without money and without credit.

This disagreeable fact threw him into a state of

violent irritability by which the conspirators in Munich were not slow to profit. An insidious scheme was consequently started both in Berlin and in Munich, which had for its object to involve Ludwig with Wilhelmstrasse. It succeeded so far that it drove the unfortunate monarch on devious courses and rendered the only man who could have saved him, Prince Bismarck, indifferent as to what might befall him, if not, indeed, rather pleased that he would be spared further worries from Munich.

The King was an honest and truthful man. When, after considerable hesitation, he at last sanctioned the decision of his Ministers to stand by Prussia in 1870, he did not act from feelings of affection but simply because he had been led to believe that she had been treacherously attacked by Napoleon III. His earnest and simple mind could not grasp the possibility of a conspiracy organised by an unscrupulous man, with the intention of deluging a whole nation, together with the civilised world, into thinking that, in drawing her sword against France, Prussia was only defending herself. This conviction stifled Ludwig's lifelong sympathies with France and made him rally to the man who, as he believed, had the hard task of preventing the invasion of the Fatherland by a powerful foe. It also decided him to lend the weight of his personality and his high position in the Fatherland to the establishment and consolidation of an Empire which must in time lead to the absorption of his beloved Bavaria.

It was a heavy sacrifice to consent to a policy which should degrade his country, but he thought it his duty not to shirk it, although he could not forget that all the sympathies of his soul, all the affections of his heart and all the culture of his intellect, drew him towards that France which he had looked upon as almost a second Fatherland and whose sovereigns had been the models he had set constantly before him in all he had ever done. Even after this sacrifice he retained his love for the land he had helped to beat, whilst shedding tears of blood over its defeat.

Under these conditions it was not difficult to rouse his sympathies once more in favour of France, whose fate seemed linked with that of Bavaria, inasmuch as eventual triumph over Prussia would bring freedom to Bavaria, which would recover its lost independence and escape from that Prussian yoke which, instead of becoming lighter, was on the contrary proving heavier every day. The problem was how to bring about such a contingency. Prince Luitpold with all his cunning could not have achieved it. The Bavarian Cabinet, presided over by Herr von Lutz, committed though it was to Prussian interests, refrained from any overt attempt against the King's authority for want of a plausible pretext. His madness was not definite enough to authorise his restraint because there was always the fear that Bismarck might veto such a plan. The only thing to do was, on the one side, to persuade the German Chancellor that Ludwig II. was meditating

an enterprise likely to compromise the security of the Empire and, on the other, to "assist" the King to participate in such an undertaking. Most likely this would have proved impossible, had not, at this juncture, Herr von Holstein, a man hitherto unknown to fame—who was, however, the *Deus ex machina* in most of the schemes for which Bismarck got the credit, and whose history has yet to be written—turned up and furnished the very weapon without which Prince Luitpold would never have been appointed Regent of his nephew's kingdom.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE HOUR AND THE MAN

HERR von HOLSTEIN was a man of very modest appearance and civil manners, who held in the Prussian Foreign Office the position of Vortragender Rat, or Councillor entrusted with the drawing up of official reports for the Minister. Many who had lived for years in Berlin, and even diplomats whose duties called them repeatedly to the Foreign Office had never seen him or even heard of his existence. Time was when he held diplomatic appointments, in foreign countries and was secretary of the German Embassy in Paris, when it was in the charge of Count von Arnim. But his sojourns abroad had never been lengthy, and the centre of his activity had always been Wilhelmstrasse, where he held an exceptional position as the confidential adviser, friend, and *alter ego* of Prince Bismarck. He was certainly one of the most remarkable men of his generation, and his sagacity far surpassed that of the Chancellor himself, who never took any important decision without consulting him, and referring to his experience and knowledge.

What the famous Père Joseph was to Richelieu, Herr von Holstein was to Prince Bismarck. He

counselled and guided him and calmed his fits of impatience and soothed his accesses of rage. He invariably showed him the right road to take and never, throughout the long years they worked together tendered mistaken or dubious advice. Diplomacy held no secrets for him, his experience in that field surpassing that of any living man, his chief not excepted. He was fond of power for power's sake, not for the advantages it might bring him, and nothing delighted him more than to have, on the quiet, a finger in every political pie in Europe. 'Twas he who suggested to Prince Bismarck the policy which achieved the latter's most statesman-like triumphs.

Personally he had no ambition, which accounts for the successes he undoubtedly won, though he never received credit for them. He always refused favours and rewards, did not care for money, and loathed official appointments, but would have been grossly affronted had any important decision been taken without his having been consulted and asked to approve of it. He was a master of the art of putting his opponents in an unfavourable light and making them say what they did not mean or intend to, and his principal occupation was to try to find out everything about his neighbour, whoever or wherever he happened to be.

He organised that secret Intelligence Department for which Wilhelmstrasse was so famous while Prince Bismarck presided over its destinies and Herr von

Holstein controlled them. Every day he received reports from his agents dispersed all over the world, and there was hardly a person in Europe of any note or consequence about whom he had not made it his business to know everything there was to know, including, be sure, the weak points and cupboard skeletons. His discretion was marvellous, and he had the gift of making others feel it without allowing a single word to escape him that might cause them to suspect that he had gained any knowledge concerning those chapters in their lives which they did not wish to expose to the world. Yet withal would he contrive to lead them to the conclusion, that it would be to their advantage not to incur his hostility, but on the contrary, to serve him faithfully and ever be ready to obey his directions—he was far too urbane (and artful) to use the word "order."

In Wilhelmstrasse he was more feared than the Chancellor, who was usually too fully absorbed in the discussion of principles to have time for details. But it was precisely to details that Herr von Holstein bent the bulk of his attention and care. He had at his finger's end the various qualities and shortcomings of those who were employed, no matter in what capacity, at the Foreign Office. As an instance of this let me relate a little incident.

Long ago, when the present Prince von Bülow was a very young man, he had a transient love affair with a lady well known in Society. It was a purely fleeting

episode and did not take place in Berlin, but was merely "*un jour sans lendemain*," which had been spent abroad. No one was aware of it and, to the best of my belief, only a handful of people know anything about it to-day, the chief characters in the romance having probably completely forgotten it. Neither young Bülow nor the lady in question had ever been seen together, and they had both observed the necessary precautions, since neither ever meant the affair to continue, their affections and interests being already engaged elsewhere. But they had reckoned without Herr von Holstein, who was *au courant* with the episode, his concern being stimulated no doubt by interest in the personality of Bülow, whom he already "spotted" as the possible successor of Prince Bismarck. In an expansive mood he dropped his habitual reserve and spoke about the matter to an Austrian diplomat with whom he was upon terms of particular friendship and confidence. I do not suppose that Prince von Bülow ever dreamt that this trifling adventure would be detected by the Argus eyes of the one man before whom everybody in the German Foreign Office trembled—and trembled with reason, because Holstein, when crossed, could be a terrible enemy and never spared those who happened to provoke his serious displeasure. He was the only person throughout the Fatherland that had a real and disinterested regard for Prince Bismarck, whom he served with dog-like devotion without looking for the customary "bone." So he held

a position of quite extraordinary strength in the eyes of the Iron Chancellor, who, to tell the truth, was Holstein's right hand rather than Holstein being his. Consider for a moment that Bismarck did not always bring off his schemes, whilst, to my knowledge and to that of those deep in the secrets of Wilhelmstrasse, Holstein never once failed to do what he had made up his mind to perform.

His turn for intrigue was absolutely marvellous. His knack of setting people by the ears when it answered his purpose was uncanny. He knew exactly what to say to wound the feelings of the man or woman with whom he was speaking, and could flatter them to the top of their (and his) bent with perfect aplomb. His experience of mankind taught him supreme contempt for it. He had seen so much of its shady side that he was apt to think it had not a good one, and always looked for the motive which, he believed, lay at the bottom of every action. Power was his darling, and he was ready to sell his soul to the Evil One in order to obtain it. Wealth, I have said, left him indifferent, and as for love he laughed at it. Rank he rather despised, because it was hampered by the rules, regulations, and restrictions of convention and etiquette—he had plenty of " small talk " for his own uses but none for the drawing-room.

By dint of his varied experiences, his immense cleverness, and his unique knowledge of the secret motives and aims of the diplomacy of the different European

countries, he had made himself indispensable to Bismarck, whom he had inspired on more than one occasion, when the Prince astonished the world by some characteristic triumph. Little by little he had become the autocrat of the Foreign Office and ruled the Iron Chancellor, as well as the meanest of its officials. Politics had no secrets for him. If he were rash enough to leave any "Memoirs," they would make the most astounding document ever published.

Like a shadow Herr von Holstein passed along the corridors of the Foreign Office; no one ever heard him move and few ever heard his voice. No one was permitted to enter his room, whence he would emerge, like a nocturnal beast of prey from its cavern, whenever there was mischief on hand or a-brewing. He was human enough to gloat over the discomfiture, secured by himself, of those whom he disliked, distrusted, or dreaded; this revealed an element of meanness in his character which few could have anticipated. But, like all autocrats, he was a bully and stuck at no refinement of cruelty, and could be as paltry as the paltriest.

He was the only person who could seek the presence of Prince Bismarck at any hour of the day or night, and oblige him to give attention to the information he brought to him. Two of his strongest points were his familiarity with what was going on in the world and the consequent facility with which he induced the Iron Chancellor to listen to his advice. Holstein was a Prussian of the Prussians; eager for the prosperity of

Prussia alone, who would have rejoiced to see her mistress of the world. So long as he and his patron and chief held the threads of European politics, these remained wholly dependent upon them, and Berlin was the centre of the diplomatic world. When they ceased to predominate, the prestige Prussia had acquired after the successes of the war of 1870 suffered in like measure, and the veil was torn from the hideous features of the Prophet of Khorassan.

Herr von Holstein had his own ideas concerning the Southern German States, ideas that differed radically from those entertained by Prince Bismarck. He did not believe in the possibility of a sincere union between these States and their Prussian conqueror. He had a more drastic plan; he would have reduced the number of small Princes who had once been independent and were now a source of embarrassment rather than strength to the cause of German unity and Imperialism. King Ludwig of Bavaria he had always feared more or less, because of his remarkable popularity among his own people, a popularity that might lead him to offer stubborn opposition to what has since become known as "Prussianisation." When he heard, therefore, that there was a party in Munich which was in favour of Prussian supremacy in Bavaria and against the separatist notions of the King, he at once hastened to enter into relations with it.

Had his advice been taken, the Palace Revolution, which was to set Prince Luitpold really, if not

nominally, on the throne in his nephew's stead, would have taken place long before it actually occurred. But Bismarck's carriage blocked the way. As we have seen, the Iron Chancellor still cherished some few ideals, the Kingly office among them; to his more matter-of-fact collaborator Divine Right was nothing but a warn-out dogma which should not be suffered to interfere with one's plans. Holstein always suspected the King of Bavaria of harbouring sinister designs against Prussia and its policy. Besides, Ludwig was one of the few people whom he could neither bully nor blackmail, and was neither influenced nor dazzled by the glory of the Hohenzollern dynasty. This small fact exasperated Herr von Holstein, if, indeed, such a word can describe the cold anger which was the only sign of impatience he was ever known to display all the time he acted as Bismarck's chief adviser and the real leader of Prussian politics. When, therefore, he learned that Prince Luitpold contemplated the supersession of his nephew on the throne of Bavaria, he knew his opportunity had come, and determined not to miss it. He might have some difficulty with Prince Bismarck, he reflected, but he should surmount that somehow.

CHAPTER XXIX

A CAMPAIGN OF CALUMNY

DOUBTLESS the reader remembers the famous telegram which, on the eve of the war of 1870, Prince Bismarck caused to be sent to the Bavarian Chambers, in which he related the so-called insult which Count Benedetti, the French Ambassador, was alleged to have offered to the King of Prussia. To-day everybody knows that the telegram was a forgery, concocted by the Chancellor, but at the time people were under the impression that it recited an actual historical fact. The King of Bavaria, in particular, was so incensed by the story of the affront to the aged William I. that it caused him to abandon his attitude of neutrality in the approaching conflict.

Herr von Holstein, with his unrivalled knowledge of human nature, at once saw that if Ludwig could be got to believe that, in common with the rest of the world, the thing was a hoax and he had been imposed upon, he would be so angry that he might be inveigled into an error of judgment, which could be interpreted in a sense contrary to Imperialist interests; because Imperialism was to become the cloak which should veil the sinister designs against the Bavarian Monarch.

But how to communicate this misrepresentation was the question. It was impossible to entrust this mission to any member of the Bavarian Ministry, which, on the contrary, it was advisable to keep out of the intrigue. Ludwig II. allowed so very few persons to come near him, and these were so thoroughly unreliable, that the conspirators could not entrust any of them with so grave a secret. The position seemed to be a veritable cul-de-sac, seeing that what Holstein was meditating was nothing more or less than treason to his own chief, who would never have forgiven him, had he suspected his intentions. But Herr von Holstein was blessed with a subtle brain, and thought long and deeply about how he was to execute the scheme which was to effect a definite rupture between the heads of the Hohenzollern and the Wittelsbach dynasties. But all things come to him who knows how to wait, and at last he hit upon a truly Machiavellian plan, which succeeded beyond all expectation.

As we have already mentioned, the one person who had never lost her hold on Ludwig's affections was his cousin, the Empress Elizabeth of Austria. They used to meet every summer and corresponded constantly when apart. The beautiful, lonely woman, who had found nothing but sorrow and disappointment amidst the splendour and pomp of her outward life, and the eccentric, strange man, who had also had such sad experiences, were drawn together by something more than sympathy—by the contempt in which they held

their surroundings and the paltry political intrigues in which they were sometimes compelled to be unwilling actors.

Elizabeth disliked Prussian politics as much as did the King, and had never forgotten her shame and anguish when she heard of the defeat of the Austrians, on the bloody field of Sadowa. She had wondered at her husband's indifference and at the facility with which the disaster had passed from his mind. She had secretly despised him for his alacrity in being ensnared in the meshes of Bismarck's policy, when the Chancellor adroitly profited by Francis Joseph's distrust of Russia, ever since the distant days of the Hungarian rebellion—which only the strong arm of the Muscovite had enabled him to crush—and now prevailed upon him to ally himself with Germany against any aggression of the Tsar. Bismarck did not believe in the possibility of such aggression, and this was perhaps the only occasion when he was induced by circumstances—aided by some cunning pressure by Herr von Holstein—to act against his own convictions and to arrange the Triple Alliance. Nevertheless the foundations were then laid of the political system of which we have witnessed the terrible effects, and which was abhorrent to the elevated and sincere minds of the King of Bavaria and the Empress of Austria.

With all the impetuosity of a passionate woman, Elizabeth was more bitter even than her royal cousin in her aversion from the means by which the new

German Empire had risen into existence. She would have given much to see it, if not destroyed, at least humiliated, and would have been overjoyed to defeat the schemes of the authors of those triumphs against which her whole soul revolted. She had never concealed her sentiments, and, of course, Herr von Holstein was quite aware of them. This circumstance inspired the infernal idea which he was not long in putting into execution.

Leading a retired and solitary life in her own country, the Empress used to spend much time in foreign travel, and though she still condescended to appear occasionally in Vienna and to grace some Court festivity with her presence, this was regarded only as a concession to the necessities of her exalted position from which she could not altogether escape. She disliked the haughty ladies of the Austrian aristocracy, who had never taken kindly to her and had sharply criticised her during the first years of her married life, when the Archduchess Sophie was paramount at Court and always exercised her influence against her young daughter-in-law. Elizabeth's delight was to slip away to the enchantments of Bavaria, where she forgot the worries of her Imperial station and led the simple life she preferred to any other.

It is curious that whilst Ludwig made friends with his servants and people out of his own sphere, the Empress also confided sometimes in her secretaries, her two teachers of Greek, and even in the woman who

used to dress her beautiful hair. This was well known to Herr von Holstein, who made a point of studying the peculiarities and habits of those whom he might use as pawns in the difficult game of chess in which he revelled. He contrived somehow to enter into relations with the Empress's hairdresser, and it was this tire-woman who one day handed to her Imperial mistress a packet which she had been bribed to deliver into Elizabeth's own hands, and which contained the proofs that Bismarck's fateful telegram was a scandalous forgery.

This *coup de théâtre* operated exactly as Holstein had foreseen. The Empress did not say a word about the documents either to Francis Joseph or to any of his Ministers, but the next time she saw the King of Bavaria, she laid them before him. His indignation knew no bounds, but he apprehended, as did his cousin, that it was best to remain silent. They both realised that the knowledge of such a secret would be dangerous to its holders, were they suspected of harbouring it. But from that day Ludwig's mind was made up. He should be free of the trammels that bound him to Prussia.

Then it was that he made overtures to the French Government in reference to the possible attitude of Bavaria in the event of a second Franco-German war. The channel through which these overtures were conveyed to their destination is not known, but it was probably either the ex-Queen of Naples, or the Duchess of Alençon, who both resided in Paris at the time.

Unfortunately the Ministry then in power in France did not grasp the importance of the message, and Ludwig, hurt at finding that his good intentions were either misunderstood or else not taken seriously, relinquished for the nonce the schemes that pointed to nothing else but the emancipation of Bavaria from the control of Prussia and Prussian statesmen.

Others, however, had become aware of the overtures, probably because they had been warned to be on the watch for them from the excited and excitable Sovereign. Prince Luitpold was informed of them, and also Herr von Lutz, but whilst the latter did not attach any importance to them—understanding only too well that the time had not come yet when they might be used with advantage against his King—the former saw in the knowledge an opening which might prove invaluable to his nefarious plot. He therefore went to Berlin on the pretext of consulting a doctor and contrived an interview with Bismarck, who had been purposely kept in ignorance of what had been going on at Munich, Herr von Holstein thinking it most prudent to allow others than himself to inform the Chancellor of Ludwig's fresh intentions.

Of course, Bismarck was angry, but took care not to let Prince Luitpold perceive that this was the case. On the contrary, he told the latter that he ought not to attach any importance to the vagaries of an unbalanced mind, and that in all likelihood the King, when his mood changed, would be the first to disown

the wild ideas that had crossed his brain. Bismarck was far too clever to give to the cunning old man who had come to him to obtain by anticipation his approval of the Palace Revolution to which he was now definitely committed, any ground for saying that he had acted in co-operation with the Prussian Government. He therefore urged him to do nothing rash, but to watch carefully the King's health and, if it became alarming, to lose no time in consulting the best doctors.

This was quite sufficient. Luitpold returned to Munich happier than he had felt for a long time. And immediately after his journey to Berlin, a whole campaign of lies was started against Ludwig II., not only in the Press but especially among the higher classes, who had long been irritated against him and had disapproved of his solitary life and of his systematic avoidance of his subjects and his capital. Moreover, the old lying rumours were again circulated about the King's mental state, which was represented as anything but normal. The necessity of a Regency began to be discussed, not quite openly and generally, but distinctly in certain circles where it had been feared all along that Ludwig's French sympathies would lead him to take steps inimical to Prussia.

Herr von Holstein was kept posted very exactly as to what was happening in Bavaria, and for the first time Bismarck thought it worth while to keep an eye on events. At this stage the friend of Ludwig's childhood, Count von Holnstein, was induced to enter the

conspiracy against the unfortunate Sovereign. He had always been in sympathy with Prussia and Prussian aims, and, besides, had taken umbrage at the treatment he had received from the King, who, as he thought, had not properly appreciated his very doubtful services. Holnstein had always courted the favour of Prince Bismarck, by whose help he hoped to become some day Prime Minister of Bavaria, and he devoted himself heart and soul to the task of strengthening Prussian influence in his country.

Happily for the cause of morality his ambitions were to be frustrated, and he was left with the remembrance of his infamy as the sole reward of one of the darkest treacheries the world had known and history recorded. But the harm he did was not to be repaired, and without his intrigues, the poor King would not have perished so miserably. We have not concealed the fact that Ludwig was not normal, but his illness consisted more in over-excited nerves than in anything of graver import. He might easily have been cured had a skilled physician been commissioned to take him in hand. Instead of this humane course everything was done to aggravate his ill-health, and to transform into dementia what was only originality carried to an extreme. Idle gossip would have it that the Monarch showed signs that the inexperienced might mistake for real insanity. In truth it only proceeded from the irritation and worry arising from consciousness that he was surrounded by impalpable and invisible dangers.

CHAPTER XXX

MEPHISTOPHELES

PERHAPS the reader may think that I have dealt at excessive length with Herr von Holstein, but he must bear with me, for I am not yet done with this extraordinary man. When the secret documents now locked in the State Archives of Berlin see the light of day, the personality of this man will appear in its real colours. He was—Heaven forgive me!—the Satan of Prussian diplomacy during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Under the surface he exercised over Berlin society a control which was attributed to Bismarck, who in reality did not trouble much about what the public thought of him and his policy.

Holstein, however, did not practise the like indifference. He was absolutely unscrupulous and far more merciless than Prince Bismarck. It was at his instigation, as we have mentioned, that the prosecution of Count Arnim was undertaken, when he did not hesitate to betray his former chief and deliver him bound hands and feet to those who had sworn his ruin. Nothing was sacred to him; no power on earth could have stopped him when he had determined upon his course. His suggestions had something very near to

genius about them. For instance, it was he who hit upon the idea of submitting the quarrel of Germany with Spain to the Pope as arbitrator—a move for which Bismarck got the kudos and which went very far towards adjusting the difficulties which had long existed between Prussia and the Roman Catholics.

The visit of the Crown Prince Frederick William to Leo XIII. was also the result of Holstein's initiative. When, too, the heir to the Prussian throne approached the Progressive party—which bitterly opposed Bismarck's policy—and contrived to meet Dr. Richter, their leader, it was Holstein who informed his chief of what was taking place and induced him to acquaint the old Emperor with all the circumstances and so procured the dismissal of certain members of the Crown Prince's household, who had conducted the negotiations. Holstein would never admit that anyone, not excepting those who had the undoubted right to express an opinion on public policy, could have the presumption to question any of the decisions arrived at by Bismarck and himself. In his eyes the person of the Imperial Chancellor was sacred and should be spared attack, even the most legitimate. Without him it is probable the German Empire would not have been organised on Bismarck's lines. Yet, like all forced and unnatural things, the colossal work to which he had applied his whole energy collapsed when circumstances changed and he was no longer at hand to direct it.

During the last years of the life of William I., when

family disputes were darkening his closing hours as well as those of his son and successor, it is said that Bismarck discussed with Holstein the perilous proclivities, already manifest, of Prince William, the Crown Prince's eldest son, who was filially engaged upon perpetual skirmishes with his parents. The wily diplomat's answer was characteristic: " Tell him to exercise his soldiers and wait. The rest will adjust itself." When informed of this remark many years later, after the Iron Chancellor had been dismissed and Holstein had accompanied him into retreat, William II. expressed his regret that he had not been compelled to follow that advice.

Not only was Holstein a convinced Imperialist, but he refused to entertain the idea of a German Empire without a Hohenzollern at its head. He had worked for this throughout his life, and worked most disinterestedly; so much must be conceded to him. His was a most complex character. Nothing in the world was worth a jot to him save power, secret power, for he would not have valued half so highly the exercise of official sway. He took diabolical delight in the knowledge that while he was intriguing, plotting, concocting ruin, victims were going about smiling and happy, utterly unconscious of their doom. He was evil incarnate, one of the cleverest men that ever moved in the sphere of those higher politics which alone rule the world.

Bismarck himself feared him and never indulged with him in the fits of anger and impatience which at

times rendered his intercourse so painful to subordinates. Holstein was the best tool the Iron Chancellor ever had, though he had to be handled cautiously even by his chief, and insisted upon doing his own work in his own way. This was an advantage in a sense, because it allowed Bismarck to disclaim, when it suited his book, all knowledge of and responsibility for objectionable or unpopular acts. Thus when Ludwig telegraphed to him for advice as to what he should do to defeat Luitpold's conspiracy to seize his person and throne, Bismarck answered that the best plan was to go to Munich and to claim the protection of his subjects against the usurper. When he sent that telegram Bismarck was merely quieting his own conscience and posing as the friendly counsellor before history and posterity. For he knew at that moment that no human effort could arrest the development of Holstein's diplomacy, skill and cunning, which had directed matters in such a way that the occupation of the throne of Bavaria by a man entirely devoted to Prussian interests was already a foregone conclusion!

Fiction has no character to match Holstein. He conducted the most difficult political negotiations with unerring aim. Nothing ever daunted or discouraged him. He lived with but one idea in his head, one passion in his heart, and that was to make Prussia the dominant factor in the world. To the attainment of that end he would have sacrificed everything and everybody without remorse.

Long ago, I once met this famous man. We had a common friend, the foreign diplomat I have already mentioned, who was one of the select few with whom Herr von Holstein deigned sometimes to exchange views of current events. One afternoon my friend asked whether I would like to make the acquaintance of Prince Bismarck's confidant. I was rather nonplussed by the question. What could this silent worker, this recluse, what could he want with poor me?

I was very young, but used to receive members of the Opposition parties, as well as Catholic deputies, among them Count Neipperg, the grandson of the second husband of the Empress Marie Louise. I had invited him to dinner a few days before to meet the newly appointed Russian Ambassador, Count Paul Schouvaloff. I never suspected that it was to this circumstance Holstein's wish to meet me was due.

I replied that I would be glad to see him if he would be good enough to call, but I confess that I awaited the outcome with some trepidation. He was not the man to come out of his way for the fun of the thing, and well I knew he could not be curious to see either me or my belongings. However, I schooled myself to extreme caution of speech.

On the appointed day Holstein duly appeared. I found him a pleasant man with agreeable manners, but quite different from what I had ventured to picture him. I ought to say that the incident took place during the winter of 1885–86, when Ludwig was still alive.

After a few minutes' talk Holstein adroitly referred to a social gathering, given by a bosom friend, at which a few days earlier I had been present. It appears that it had excited some uneasiness in Government circles, because Count Neipperg, who was known to be opposed to Bismarck's policy and was, moreover, a friend of the King of Bavaria, had met there and had a long conversation with a friend of mine, the Russian Ambassador, who was *persona grata* with the Tsar and might have enlightened the latter as to the opinions of those who hoped for a change of government in Germany and for the adoption of another policy especially in regard to the Southern German States.

Had this interlude happened at the present day, it is not unlikely I might have been ambitious and tried to ascertain whether the ostensible was also the real reason for the honour Herr von Holstein had done me in suing for my acquaintance. But at twenty-five one cannot cope with a man of his kind, and so I affected not to understand what he was driving at. To tell the truth I was alarmed at these overtures and at the possibility of being drawn into an intrigue that might compromise me with my family. Holstein never called again.

But to return, it would be very interesting to have a glance at the correspondence which, at the date we have reached, passed between Wilhelmstrasse and its various friends and servants in Munich. There can be no doubt but that, during the period of Bismarck's

rule, Prussia's hand held the threads of the different intrigues which led to Ludwig's deposition and subsequent incarceration in the castle of Berg. For Prince Luitpold would never have dared to embark upon such a dangerous enterprise without an assurance that it would be, if not approved, at least looked upon with equanimity, if not with pleasure, genuine or assumed, by Prussia.

Courage was the leading attribute of the late Prince Regent of Bavaria, and it required an uncommonly bold man to lock up as a lunatic the head of his House and the Sovereign of an independent Realm, on the futile pretexts which were alleged when the question of placing Ludwig under restraint came to be discussed. Such a step could only be justified at all by the fact that Ludwig had meditated a line of policy dangerous to the safety of his country and of the Empire of which it formed part. To prove that this was the case was the one aim of Prince Luitpold as well as of Herr von Holstein who, figuratively speaking, stood at his elbow.

With the resources at their command, the thing was relatively easy, though it demanded more than unscrupulousness to perform it. That they both knew and felt this, is shown by the care taken to prove Ludwig's insanity without allowing him to be examined by doctors conscientious enough to avow the truth and brave enough and pure enough not to allow themselves to be browbeaten, or corrupted, or influenced by

the so-called reasons of State which were advanced to palliate a crime worthy of the Middle Ages.

Beyond question or cavil, the conspiracy against Ludwig II., King of Bavaria—in which his father's brother and many persons whom he had loaded with gifts and favours were engaged—was the plot of others than those who actually put it into execution. "Cherchez à qui le crime profite." Apart from Prince Luitpold, who did not count, the only Power which could benefit by the removal of a man who might or might not have thwarted Bismarck's schemes was Prussia and Prussia alone.

CHAPTER XXXI

PLAYING HIS ENEMIES' GAME

I MUST now consider the position of Bavaria at the time of Ludwig's death, for it has been completely misunderstood in other countries, which regarded her merely as a province of Prussia and not as an independent kingdom. We have learned some of the facts already, but it will be useful to tie up the loose ends, so to speak, and make them a connected whole.

Far from being Prussian, among the States which passed under the German yoke, Bavaria had not concealed the bitterness with which she entered the alliance imposed upon her. Her anger, humiliation and disgust at Prussian arrogance had never subsided and her hatred of the conqueror remained as vivid and as intense as it had been after Sadowa. Bavaria clung to her independence and never pardoned her rulers for their acquiescence in its destruction. When the Prussian General Staff proceeded to reorganise the Bavarian Army, it appointed its own non-commissioned officers and instructors to drill the regiments after the Prussian model. But these men soon found their position intolerable, and Berlin at last resigned the method of instructing the Bavarians by foreign teachers and retained only the high command in its hands.

This simple fact shows that the Bavarian people did not wish to throw in their lot with Prussia, whom they considered as their natural enemy. Good, honest folk, they could easily be roused to intense passion, and this is what occurred when they discovered they were expected to play the cat's-paw to their Prussian conquerors. The events which followed upon the war with France, and especially the complications that accompanied the Kulturkampf, irritated both the peasantry, especially in Tyrol, and the aristocracy against Bismarck, whose policy they chose to liken to persecution of their Church and priests.

Prince Hohenlohe's administration, which was afterwards controlled by that arch-Bismarckian, Herr von Lutz, had never been popular, inasmuch it was truly suspected of playing the Prussian game. Imperialism had not yet become an accepted principle in Bavaria (as it is now), and the country had not grown accustomed to look to the Empire for protection. Indeed, it did not realise that it needed protection, because it had no wish for war, and preferred a quiet life, free from foreign complications, to any laurels won on victorious battlefields. How was it advantaged by helping Prussia to win battles of which the latter took all the glory and reaped all the reward?

Such was the prevailing feeling throughout the monarchy of the Wittelsbachs during the generation after the Franco-German War, the triumphs of which had excited no sympathy and little enthusiasm in South

Germany in general and Bavaria in particular. The latter had always nourished French sympathies, which came to the surface rather more frequently and more prominently than Berlin relished, when the question of her neutrality cropped up in 1870. Though the authorities succeeded in repressing them, the very fact of their existence at the moment when the fate of Germany hung in the balance, gave the leading Prussian statesmen occasion to think furiously. Bismarck, as well as Herr von Holstein and von Moltke and the officer of the General Staff, knew how weak were the links binding the Southern States to the Empire. Nor should they become stronger, so long as the Sovereign who occupied the throne of Bavaria was not friendly to the hegemony of Prussia.

That Ludwig would never become so was beyond doubt. For one thing, he had too high an opinion of his own importance willingly to accept a subordinate position in an Empire which, without him, was an impossibility and in the proclamation of which he had been beguiled to take a part under false pretences. This may seem a hard saying, but it is almost certain he had been led to believe that the Imperial dignity would be elective as of old and that, consequently, there was a chance that a Wittelsbach might, now and again, be chosen to wear the Imperial diadem. He had been told that the only reason why the honour had been first offered to the King of Prussia was because of his great age and the victories which his troops had won.

Never for a moment did Ludwig dream that it was intended, all along, to make the Hohenzollern dynasty Emperors of Germany, and not "German Emperors," the designation which was in temporary vogue simply to throw dust in the eyes of public opinion and the smaller States.

Ludwig nursed his wrath at the duplicity practised upon him, but did not muster sufficient courage to try to repair his mistake until he was informed of Bismarck's treachery, as related in a former chapter. Until the actual text of the Ems despatch was laid under his eyes, he had wrapped himself up in a haughty silence, which was made up partly of contempt and partly of despair that he could not struggle against the resistless tide that was bearing him and his people into the abyss. He who, in the first years of his reign, took an honest pride in his Army, began to dislike the very sight of a soldier and avoided every occasion of assembling his troops, who must have known that though he was their commander-in-chief, he had *his* master in the guise of a Prussian general, who would not scruple, if he thought it necessary or advisable, to brush him aside, his kingship notwithstanding.

In some respects Ludwig was absolutely childish, and he sulked as a child throughout the years when he might have asserted himself and obtained for his people adequate consideration. His adversaries could not have countered him during the negotiations at Versailles, when the Ministers of the different States were discuss-

ing the grave question of the Empire, because it could not have been proclaimed if the King of Bavaria had not taken the initiative of offering the crown to his uncle in his name and in that of the other German princes.

Bismarck's scheme imperatively demanded that not Germany only, but the whole world should suppose that the Hohenzollerns never coveted the Imperial throne, but had consented to mount it, not to disappoint the hopes of those who thought that the future security of Germany called them to that high function if their splendid triumphs were not to have been achieved in vain. Bismarck, therefore, was quite ready to make Bavaria any concessions in reason, and might even have yielded the control of her armies, in spite of the protests of Moltke and the General Staff, had the King insisted on this condition. But, unstable in all his ways, Ludwig gave way under the pressure of his entourage, especially that of his private secretary, Herr von Eisenhart, to whose ill-omened interference so many of the Monarch's mistakes can be traced.

When, in consequence of Herr von Holstein's diplomacy, the King was put in possession of the real text of the Ems despatch, his first feeling, as we have seen, was one of intense anger, but after thinking the matter over, he concluded that an act of deceit of that magnitude untied his hands and left him free to follow his own inclinations towards rupture with Prussia. Then ensued the overtures in his name to the French Govern-

ment, and he thought of putting himself and his country under the protection of France, and promising absolute neutrality in the event of another war between her and Germany.

It were easy to have prevailed upon his people to follow him in that line of conduct. The Bavarians had no taste for any more fighting for the Prussians. They remembered how on the pretext of giving them an opportunity of distinguishing themselves, they had always been assigned the posts of danger and had sacrificed their men; but, on their part, the Prussians took precious good care to spare their regiments from murderous fire. The memory still rankled in their hearts, and they would not have minded paying back the detested Prussians in their own coin. Certain it is that a treaty with France, guaranteeing the neutrality of Bavaria in a possible struggle with Prussia, would have been immensely popular and have enabled the King to recover the affection and sympathies of his people.

Bismarck was aware of all these things, and Herr von Holstein had given them even more attention than his chief had done. The diplomat understood that Prussia could not afford to miss any chance, and that it was essential to proceed as quickly as possible with the Prussianising of Bavaria and her Army. This could not go forward, however, so long as Ludwig was King. He must, therefore, be removed, but in such a way that the Prussian Foreign Office could not be accused of being an accessory to the plot.

Unhappily Ludwig's conduct gave his enemies the necessary opportunity for carrying through their unsavoury schemes. His recklessness in money matters, his eccentricities, his love of solitude, and his avoidance of the men—officials and others—whom he was in duty bound to receive, all furnished grounds on which a diagnosis of insanity could be based. Holstein, von Lutz, and Prince Luitpold knew that the thing which would most infuriate Ludwig, and perhaps drive him to extreme measures, would be to cut his credit and to deprive him of the money without which he could not minister to his extravagant hobbies.

At a nod the *fiat* was issued. It was suddenly discovered that the expenses of the Royal Household could not be met. The attempts to borrow mysteriously fell through, no one could explain why, for the securities which the King could offer were more than sufficient to satisfy the most ferocious money-lenders. Faced without means to maintain his state, Ludwig was rendered desperate. His clumsy appeals to relatives and friends were of no avail and did not even meet with a reply. When the Empress Elizabeth offered help, she was forbidden by Francis Joseph, who declared that he could not allow her to mix herself up in what was no concern of hers and might implicate his Government. At this juncture the King of Bavaria remembered, as perhaps it was intended he should, his former sympathies for France, and, through the medium of persons whom he believed to be devoted to his interests, whilst

in reality they were the very reverse, endeavoured to raise a loan in France in exchange for a promise of neutrality in the case of another Franco-German war.

When this became known—and it was not long before Prince Luitpold was informed of the whole affair—a reason was supplied for questioning His Majesty's sanity, and his doom was sealed. The King's oddity had never been denied; it was, in fact, notorious. But resort to a loan to recruit his exchequer was one of the sanest things he ever did—it is one of the commonest incidents of social life—and he had, moreover, shown himself in former years far stranger mentally than he was in the months preceding his miserable and tragic death. Nevertheless, it cannot be alleged that the hereditary curse of the Wittelsbachs had passed him by without spot or blemish.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE PLOT

THAT some abnormal change was taking place in Ludwig's mind was clear from his behaviour one Christmas night, whilst attending Midnight Mass in the Royal Chapel at Munich along with his mother, the Dowager Queen, and the other members of the Royal Family. He suddenly laid aside his prayer-book and, falling on his knees, buried his face in his hands and began sobbing aloud, to the dismay of the assistants and Court attendants. Taking him by the arm, the Queen and his uncle Prince Luitpold led him back to his apartments, when he became positively hysterical. His Ministers had required him, a few days before, to sign the death-warrant of a criminal whom they had been unable to recommend to mercy, and it was supposed that this hard necessity had unmanned him.

Thenceforward he became subject to similar explosions, which caused much distress to his friends. He showed other signs of psychic disturbance; for instance, in his hatred of women. One day, at Hohenschwangau, he cried out angrily to his private secretary that he had seen a woman in the garden. As the secretary did not understand him, Ludwig repeated, "I have seen a woman

in the garden," whereupon it was inferred that such a sight—which no sane person would regard as singular—had, for some unknown reason, become distasteful. To the end of his days the Sovereign continued to shun woman's society, and even the royal princesses, excepting his cousin Prince Leopold's wife, the Princess Gisela, found it difficult to have access to him.

On the other hand, he discovered a preference for the company of menials, making friends with several of the servants and employees on his estates. One of his grooms, Joseph Volkl, was so far favoured that he once accompanied him on a short journey to Switzerland, during which he was allowed to sit beside him in the carriage. Of course, this turned his head and, becoming impertinent, he was dismissed by the King, who transferred his interest to one of his equerries. This was a man named Hornig who, for eighteen years, acted as one of his private secretaries and who, too, was discharged for want of due respect. He was succeeded by a groom of the chambers, called Hesselschwerdt, who managed to ingratiate himself so well with his Sovereign, that he was employed frequently to bear confidential letters, and who shamefully betrayed his master's trust by playing an abominable part in the drama that cost Ludwig his life. Two of the King's secretaries also had considerable influence over him—one of them, Doctor von Ziegler, was really devoted to him—but the King soon grew tired of them and they had to withdraw. This happened in 1883, after which

year Ludwig's only society comprised a few servants; his aides-de-camp on duty and his Ministers seeing him rarely and not without much trouble.

But his principal favourite, after Wagner, was Kainz, a comedian of the Munich Court Theatre, who captivated his fancy during a performance of "Marion Delorme," in which he played the part of Didier. The King was so delighted with his rendering of this difficult drama, one of Victor Hugo's most powerful plays, that he had him called to the royal box and commanded him to repeat, for his benefit alone, in the Munich Palace, the verses to which he had lent such expression that they fascinated the Sovereign. This first visit was followed by many others, and the comedian was soon invited to stay at Linderhof and to accompany Ludwig on a trip to Switzerland, which the latter undertook under the assumed name of Marquis de Saverny, one of the heroes of the drama of "Marion Delorme," Kainz being ordered to call himself Didier. But this friendship, too, was abruptly broken off, owing to some misunderstanding, and Kainz was suddenly dismissed from the Court Theatre of Munich by order of the King, without explanation.

All these peculiarities could not be concealed; nor was there the least desire to hide them. Fresh reports were set about touching the King's mental aberrations. That these rumours were purposely disseminated there can be no doubt, considering the sources whence they emanated; that they were destined to lead to his

deposition is practically certain if we regard them in the light of later events. It remains to relate the details of the drama and to present to the reader some of its principal actors.

Count Holnstein has already been introduced. In the tragedy he plays the part of traitor and deserves more than a passing mention. He was, above everything, ambitious. He had hoped to occupy a high place in the State, thanks to his early intimacy with the King, whose companion he had been in childhood, and over whom he had acquired considerable influence, which he knew but too well how to use. But he soon discovered that Ludwig, weak as he was in many respects, was slow to yield on matters of principle. Holnstein was at heart a Prussian and had always been an admirer of Prussian policy, to which he had more than once attempted to convert the King but without success. He had worked with the utmost energy for the establishment of the German Empire through the personal initiative of the small German Sovereigns' offering the Imperial Crown to William I. of Prussia. And he had displayed exceptional activity on the occasion when Ludwig was at last induced to compromise the independence of Bavaria and his own freedom of action, through the importunacy of his principal advisers and Ministers, who had, in effect, coerced his better judgment.

Holnstein had thought that his intervention would secure him an important position at the Bavarian as

well as at the Prussian Court; but in this he had miscalculated the value which Bismarck attached to his interference, and found himself more or less ignored, to his mortification and sorrow. Later, however, he managed to win the good graces of Prince Luitpold, and this caused him to be looked upon once more in Berlin as a person capable of becoming even more useful in the future than he had been in the past. A journey which he made to Berlin and other quarters about this time resulted in a renewal of his former relations with Prince Bismarck, and also in the discharge of some of the considerable debts he had contracted. After this trip he resumed his place at the side of the King of Bavaria, but at the same time kept in close touch with the latter's uncle and the Prussian Government, which he regularly informed as to all that was going on at Hohenschwangau, or Neuschwanstein, or wherever Ludwig happened to sojourn.

In order to strengthen his influence over the King and hold the Sovereign's household under his control, he placed around Ludwig as personal attendants soldiers of the Light Horse Regiment he had commanded, contriving to dismiss the King's former valets and grooms, of whose blind compliance with his wishes he did not feel sure. The obvious objection to this plan consisted in the men's utter ignorance of the duties they were expected to perform. They had, of course, to undergo a course of training, but nevertheless showed themselves often so very awkward that the King grew

impatient and angry; indeed, he was sometimes so irate that he treated them with a brutality which was considered to be one of the symptoms of that insanity with which everybody in his immediate proximity felt he was afflicted.

At last, worried beyond words, Ludwig communicated with his servants in writing, and consequently rarely allowed them in his presence. When he wished to give directions in a hurry, he did so through the closed doors, against which they were to scratch, in order to let him know they had understood him and had carried out his instructions. Naturally the King's foolish device was deemed another sign of his malady; though really it was merely the boredom of being waited upon by people who had not the least idea of his requirements.

One can only wonder that the King had not sufficient self-respect to prohibit Count Holnstein from choosing his own *protégés* and depriving him of the services of men who had been for years attached to his household, and some of whom had attended his father, the late King. One must suppose that Ludwig was already living in a world of dreams, in which he had ceased to concern himself about mundane affairs, and acquiesced in his Master of the Horse's stewardship, perhaps was even grateful to him for sparing him domestic details and their worry. As a consequence of this cunning and sly interference, the King was surrounded with persons on whom Count Holnstein could

rely implicitly to say and do and swear precisely as they were bidden.

Now, Ludwig could not have been pronounced mad had not his servants and personal attendants—the only folk he consented to see during the last two years of his life—declared that he was out of his mind and indulged in extravagances no sane being would ever have committed. They related wonderful tales of how he was in constant dread of seeing visions or meeting ghosts during the nightly rambles he was so fond of taking, either alone or attended only by one or two men whom he thought he could trust, but who were actually in the pay of his uncle and the Prussian Government, creatures who voluntarily played on his weaknesses and resorted to the most despicable tricks to stimulate his too volatile imagination. For instance, one of them, unknown to the King, walked behind him, and when he complained of footsteps, the others avowed they could not hear a sound and suggested that he must be the victim of hallucinations.

How long this might have gone on it is difficult to say, because Count Holnstein, with a steady eye on his bread and butter, saw no overwhelming reason to hurry matters. He maintained communication with his Sovereign's enemies and continually referred to Berlin and to Prince Bismarck for instructions, but did not think of handing over to Prince Luitpold and the Bavarian Ministry (which was absolutely at the devotion of Prussia) the materials he had accumulated during the

years he had been living with the King, deeming it to his advantage to remain master of the situation, and so, at the psychological moment, go over to the side which would recompense him most adequately.

Unfortunately, Ludwig quarrelled with Count Holnstein during the year 1883, dismissed him instantly with some show of needless severity, and forbade him his presence ever afterwards. The Count could be a most dangerous enemy, and in his rage swore vengeance against the King, and determined to have him not only dethroned, but also put under restraint, which to a man of Ludwig's temperament was tantamount to sentence of death. He had collected ample evidence to satisfy a " packed " jury during the period in which he had had the King under observation and, as we have just seen, had surrounded him with men as ready as himself to say and do everything that was asked of them—for a consideration.

To the conspirators all was fair in love and villainy. Ludwig had a habit of tearing up his own writings into small fragments and throwing these into the waste-paper basket. Holnstein was a picker-up of unconsidered trifles. Carefully gathering these scraps, he put together words which originally had had no reference to one another, and this produced documents which became later very precious to those who meant to put the Sovereign out of the way. With the help of Mayer, one of Ludwig's valets, and of Hesselschwerdt, groom of the chambers, he drew up an indictment which went

far to prove that it was high time to place the King in the charge of a mental specialist. This enabled Prince Luitpold, with the connivance of the Prussian Government, to have himself appointed as Regent of Bavaria.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE KING'S INDEBTEDNESS

AS we have already learned, the solitude in which Ludwig lived had given rise to all kinds of malicious reports. Moreover, it exercised a deplorable effect on him physically and mentally, as it left him alone with his thoughts, unable to shake off through conversation with friends the gloomy forebodings which had assailed him for years. He became morbidly afraid of strange faces, and even of persons whom he knew well.

His financial embarrassments were mainly due to his shunning the advice of those who might have helped him materially. He had always been haunted with the dread of madness, and his desire for an isolated life proceeded partly from fear lest there might be something in his manners and talk that might lend colour to any gossip that he had fallen a victim to the hereditary scourge of his race. When his building mania seized him, he had, through his Minister of Finance, Dr. von Riedel, contracted a loan of seven and a half millions of marks, guaranteed by the revenues of the Civil List. A year later a demand for a further six millions was refused, von Riedel explaining that he could not obtain credit for such a sum, as nearly all his private resources

were exhausted. The King refusing to accept this as a valid reason for retrenchment, von Riedel resigned. Thereupon his colleagues intervened, declaring they would resign also. Ludwig yielded, and retained in power the very man who, within a few months, should hurl him from his throne, Baron von Lutz.

Touching the King's indebtedness, something, however brief, must be said, for rumour ascribed it to dementia, which menaced the security of the State, to say nothing of its unfortunate victim. Be it stated at once that his debts never attained an amount that would have involved him in bankruptcy. Of this the best proof lies in the fact that they were paid in less than ten years after his death, out of part of the Civil List to which his successor, Otto, became entitled on accession, the balance of said List being appropriated by the Prince Regent as an addition to his own income. More than that, an arrangement with his creditors was the last thing which Ludwig's enemies wished. Bills were purposely left unpaid by order of von Lutz, who was hand-in-glove with Prince Luitpold, and quasi-authoritative statements of the King's desperate financial straits were spread with assiduity and sometimes communicated to the Press by members of his own family!

Some creditors were even induced to proceed against him juridically, and his so-called insolvency became so well known, that even the children in the street spoke about it. One day Ludwig was walking in the woods at Neuschwanstein, when he met a little boy busy

collecting dry sticks. He asked why he did so, and the laddie answered that his parents were too poor to buy fuel.

" Why don't you apply to the King ? " said Ludwig. " He would give you something."

" Oh ! but the King has got no money," exclaimed the boy, " and no one will lend him any."

Ludwig burst out laughing and gave five marks to the child, but such episodes irritated him more than anything else.

At last, on the 5th of May, 1886, his Ministers advised that his money matters must be put in order, and that he must consent to drastic retrenchment. The King knew better than people gave him credit for of the extent of his resources, and was aware that he could obtain sufficient security for a loan which should clear all his liabilities and leave him with a good sum of money in hand. Far from being opposed to economy in the administration of his household and privy purse, he was the first to propose to suspend building operations at Herrenchiemsee. In no sense was he the unreasonable being he was represented to be; on the contrary, whenever he chose, along with expert counsellors in whom he had confidence, to address himself seriously to practical and financial matters, he could be a keen man of business. How came it about, then, that all of a sudden he was confronted with an empty exchequer and no credit ? He could not find the means to pay his most pressing creditors. Once or twice they had appealed

to him personally and he had given orders that their claims were to be met; this had not been done, though large sums were standing at his credit in different banks. But whenever he mentioned the fact, he was informed that this money had already been disposed of or was earmarked for a definite purpose. The truth is that, owing to Count Holnstein's secret instructions, no one durst settle the King's accounts, and clamorous creditors were told that his Majesty had no money. His secretaries, his Treasurer, the Controller of his Household, were all in the pay of Prince Luitpold, who worked with the Prussian Government to precipitate a catastrophe. It was necessary to the security of the State—in other words, to the success of a villainous plot—that Ludwig should be declared irresponsible for his actions, and everybody and everything conspired to this result.

We can now see the ramifications of the fell conspiracy. The poor King was completely trapped. Every loophole of escape was stopped and the end was but a question of time. Whether he suspected the contemplated treason or not, he realised he had been duped at every turn and compelled, *nolens volens*, to play a part which was repugnant to his sense of patriotism and the very opposite of that which he had been ambitious to fill. His sins of omission and commission had been equally grave. He knew he had been weak when he ought to have been as firm as adamant and obstinate when he ought to have conceded. He had sought no personal gain, but had been animated by a vague desire

that somehow good might come out of it for his beloved Bavaria. Every promise made to him had been broken, and he had been the cat's-paw of the wily schemers who had done all they could to further the arrogant aims of Prussia—and to line their pockets.

To a passionate nature like his the discovery was appalling, and he began to ponder the possibility of undoing, at least partially, the evil he had unconsciously done to his people and his race. During his several journeys to Versailles and the South of France, he had met several eminent Frenchmen with whom he felt in sympathy and had talked with some of them, the Duc de Broglie, for instance, for whose character he professed, in common with all who had the honour to know him, high respect and esteem. In these conversations he had been forced to recognise at last, that had the attitude of Bavaria only been different, the curse of Prussian militarism would never have been allowed to establish itself in Central Europe and to tyrannise humanity.

His loftier instincts had been aroused through contact with French civilisation, and he resolved, if it were practicable (which was a forlorn hope), to withdraw from the engagements that bound him to Prussia. Ludwig was too simple-minded to tackle a situation with which even the most sagacious statesman could hardly have coped. He was impulsive and outspoken, and uttered sentiments which permitted the guilty men around him to form a shrewd guess of what was passing through

his mind. They hastened to acquaint Count von Holnstein and von Lutz of the direction to which his thoughts were turning. This proved the finishing touch, and the plotters decided to push on with the conspiracy to entrust the Government of the country to Prince Luitpold, who was the tool of Prussia, and whose ambition soared no higher than to wear the epaulettes of a Prussian general.

To what extent was Prince Bismarck aware of what was contemplated against the person of the King? He had always professed admiration for the young Monarch, and said he would stand by him, no matter what occurred. He was not a man to lie merely for the sake of lying, and one wonders what was his actual share in the tragedy. It is not unlikely that, while informed of Ludwig's latest trend of thought, he had not been explicitly told of the designs on the King's liberty. At any rate, one is entitled to infer so much from the telegram he sent to Neuschwanstein, in answer to Ludwig's request for protection against his uncle, in which (as we have already seen) he advised the King to go at once to Munich and show himself to his people, and appeal to their sentiments of fidelity for him and his dynasty. But when this counsel reached him, Ludwig's energy had evaporated and he had not the tenacity of purpose to act on the advice, which, one must remember, may have been given only because it was certain it would not be followed, and that it was just as well to have it in evidence that the Chancellor had

not appeared to condone so grave an outrage as the deposition of a legitimate King by his own family and a handful of unscrupulous men.

When Ludwig saw that neither his Ministers, nor the Controller of his Household, nor his Treasurer would help him out of his financial troubles, he determined to try personally to find the money he required. He applied to his kinsmen, the Prince of Thurn and Taxis, at Ratisbon, to the Emperor of Brazil, and to the King of Sweden, to ask their assistance, but he applied in vain, for the simple reason that traitors in his own camp delivered the letters, not to the addressees, but to the Bavarian Cabinet. Ludwig next approached certain banking houses, such as Rothschild and Bleichroder. The latter referred the matter to Prince Bismarck, who replied that it was a question for the Bavarian Ministry to settle, and that he could not mix himself up in it. Of course, Bleichroder proceeded no farther.

Some of Ludwig's relatives, who were not on terms with Prince Luitpold, undertook to sound Rothschild's Parisian house, offering the guarantee of the Orleans family. It is said that this project emanated from the Duchess of Alençon, who had let bygones be bygones, and remained the King's friend, and that the ex-Queen Isabella of Spain also took an active part in it. It is supposed that Ludwig was led to believe that such a loan might be contracted, if he agreed to observe strict neutrality in the event of another war between France and Germany. This jumped (as we know) with his

personal feelings on the subject, and he accepted the condition forthwith, writing to that effect to Rothschild's secretary. The loan was to be secured on his personal properties in Bavaria and Tyrol, and was to amount to forty million francs, at 4 per cent. interest. This fact should suffice to dispose of the rumour that Ludwig's credit was pledged for more than it was worth, because his whole debts did not come to more than fourteen millions—not even half of what one of the most prudent financial houses in Europe seemed prepared to advance.

Again ill luck dogged the King. He handed his letter for Paris to Hesselschwerdt, in whom he had great confidence, no one knows why, because he was an entirely uneducated man, whose character was not beyond question, and against whom, in point of fact, Ludwig had been cautioned more than once. Hesselschwerdt was in the pay of Count von Holnstein, to whom he reported daily all that took place at Neuschwanstein, or Hohenschwangau, and who had warned him that he would disobey orders at the peril of his life. Accordingly Holnstein had learned through this channel of the negotiations that were being privately conducted by the King with some members of the Orleans family and with the Paris house of Rothschild, having enjoined the groom to telegraph to him at Carlsbad, whither he had gone for the cure, when Ludwig sent any definite mission abroad, especially to Paris. But for Hesselschwerdt's treason it is probable that the tragedy in which Ludwig lost his life would have been averted.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE DOOM OF MADNESS

COUNT HOLNSTEIN had scarcely been ten days in Carlsbad, when he received a telegram from Hesselschwerdt saying that the King had sent him to Paris, with an autograph letter on the subject of a loan with the House of Rothschild and containing the written engagement not to take part in any war that might break out between France and Prussia. Hesselschwerdt was to bring back, along with the reply, a large sum of money with which Ludwig meant to pay off several of his most pressing debts. Holnstein immediately left Carlsbad and returned to Munich, where his accomplice handed him the King's private letter.

Without delay the Count conveyed the man to the President of the Council of Ministers, von Lutz, who sought an immediate audience of Prince Luitpold. Presently the whole Ministry, which had been advised by telephone of what had occurred, arrived and was also admitted to the Prince. After a brief conference of the parties the King's letter was opened and Hesselschwerdt forbidden to go to Paris. Then four doctors were summoned and, in compliance with the orders of

Luitpold and the Government, drew up a statement that the King was mad beyond hope of recovery. Possessed of this document, Prince Luitpold had the requisite excuse for convening a family council to consider the necessity of putting the Sovereign in custody of an official guardian, who should become responsible for him.

This council, in which the Princes of the Royal Family took part, decided—with two dissentients who firmly protested against the intended course of action—to constitute a Regency with Prince Luitpold at its head and place the King under restraint. The Cabinet was to remain in office, and the guardianship of Ludwig was offered to Count Castell, who declined this task, declaring that he would not sanction such an iniquity; thereupon Count Holnstein was invited to undertake the duty and accepted it with alacrity.

At the same time von Lutz, the Premier, informed Prince Bismarck of what had happened, as well as of the negotiations between the King and the members of the Orleans family and the French bankers, and of the condition which the latter had attached to the loan. Old Prince Luitpold, whose hypocrisy bordered on the monstrous, insisted that the King should be acquainted by a letter which he had written of the changes that had been made, "in the hope," as he expressed it, that Ludwig "would willingly acquiesce in them," as if it were quite a customary thing to expect a man to declare himself mad and be ready to submit to the

care of an alienist! Possibly there may have lurked at the back of the Regent's mind a fiendish desire to drive the wretched King really mad by systematic persecutions which should not only secure this end but justify the repressive measures they were bent on adopting.

In the meanwhile the Monarch—in ignorance (but was it blissful?) of these subterranean schemes—remained at Neuschwanstein awaiting the return of his messenger. He appeared to be tranquil and to wear the look of one who had come to a great resolution that had brought peace of mind with it. He spoke to his servants, Mayer and Weber, about the future and how he should deliver Bavaria from Prussia, adding that his people would yet be grateful to him for his courage, because they would be spared the horrors of another war and escape the reverses of fortune which, he felt certain, would sooner or later befall Prussia and its dynasty. His words were, of course, immediately reported to Count Holnstein, who transmitted them to Berlin, where, he anticipated, they would end the slightest hesitation that might still be entertained in regard to the revolution in Bavaria and the emergence of a usurper.

Naturally, when the royal servants at Neuschwanstein heard that the King was to be abducted, they seized the opportunity to appropriate what souvenirs they could, the more valuable the better. Not to put too fine a point upon it, their behaviour throughout the

whole affair was perfectly shocking. In spite of the generosity he had shown them, not one had the decency to warn their master of his imminent peril. They had gone over to the enemy in the hope of a handsome reward for their treachery; in this, however, it is satisfactory to add they were disappointed, for they were instantly dismissed with a small pension.

But why no word from Paris? To Ludwig, passing the time in his country seat, with occasional twinges of gnawing anxiety, came only a short note from Hesselschwerdt, that he had been obliged to delay his departure for a few days, owing to a cold he had contracted on his way from Neuschwanstein to Munich. But the groom of the chambers had not reckoned on the indiscretion of the King's hairdresser, one of the smaller fry who played a base part, who incautiously told Ludwig that Hesselschwerdt had been seen in Munich, a fact that awakened suspicions which, unluckily, did not go as far as to create a doubt whether the go-between, in whom his confidence was complete, would ever dream of tampering with the letter.

At Munich steady progress was made with the grand *coup*, every step of which had been carefully thought out months beforehand. A Commission was appointed to go to Hohenschwangau and thence to Neuschwanstein, with instructions to remove the King, by force if necessary, and place him in the hands of certain doctors who should convey him to the Castle of Linderhof, where he was to be confined. The Commission

consisted of Baron von Crailsheim, Count Holnstein, Count Törring, Lieutenant-Colonel Baron Washington, who was to become the King's Chamberlain, Dr. von Gudden, the director of the Munich Asylum, Dr. Müller and four keepers.

Considering that all the King's servants save Osterholzer, his coachman, who was deemed incorruptible, had been admitted to the secret, it is extraordinary they did not betray their paymasters, however ready to betray their Sovereign—thus establishing, in a somewhat unlooked-for fashion, the truth of the saying that "there's honour among thieves." The least hint would have aroused the apprehensions of the villagers of Hohenschwangau, with whom Ludwig was so popular that there is no doubt but that they would have attempted to deliver him from his toils.

Hohenschwangau, the seat of the Dowager Queen, was not inhabited at the period we have reached (June, 1886), Her Majesty being then in residence at her cottage in the mountains of the Bavarian Tyrol; but Ludwig's servants and horses were then in quarters, although the King himself was at the Castle of Neuschwanstein, about half an hour's distance away. On the 7th of June the steward at Hohenschwangau received orders to prepare rooms for a gentleman in attendance on the Queen Mother, Baron Malsen, who was supposed to arrive with his family to spend some weeks at the castle.

On the 9th of the same month, about ten o'clock

at night, royal carriages drove up from Munich, bringing several gentlemen—none of whom was Baron Malsen—but no lady, though two had been expected. The steward, however, did not at first attach much importance to this detail and hastened to show the gentlemen to their rooms. This done, he noticed four men in black in the hall, whom he took for the valets of the guests and inquired whether this were the case.

To his dismay one of them answered, "Oh no! We are not servants, we are keepers, and have come with Dr. Gudden."

Then another turned to a mate with the question, "Have you brought white gloves?"

"No! Why ought I to have brought them?"

"Well," retorted the other, "we've got to take the King and must have white gloves."

Horrified, the steward rushed out of the hall to inform the Sovereign of the design on his person. As he passed the door of the telephone-room he heard Zanders, the King's courier, and Gerhacker, the head *chef*, in talk with the valet Mayer at Neuschwanstein.

"Zanders must come at once to the King," Mayer was saying.

"I can't come," was the answer; "tell him I have left for Linderhof."

And then the *chef* had a turn. "Is everything quiet so far?"

"Yes."

"When are they to come? At four o'clock?" inquired Gerhacker.

"No! that will be far too late," shouted Mayer, so loudly that his voice resounded throughout the room. "At three!"

Hastening to the stables, the steward despatched several messengers to Neuschwanstein to acquaint Ludwig with the treachery. But another had preceded him. "Faithful found. Among the faithless faithful only he," the coachman, Osterholzer, had been harnessing the horses to the King's carriage for the customary drive, which Ludwig generally liked to take late at night, when the Munich Commissioners arrived at Hohenschwangau.

Holnstein immediately repaired to the stables and, seeing the coachman thus occupied, ordered him to unharness his beasts, because another carriage was to be prepared for the King and another coachman was to drive him.

Osterholzer at once smelt mischief and, without saying a word, obeyed the orders of the Master of the Horse and, unharnessing his steeds, led them back to their stalls. Then he headed for Neuschwanstein as quickly as his legs could take him, by mountain tracks only known to the natives, and told the valet of the singular happenings at Hohenschwangau.

Weber took him to the King, who, at first, did not grasp the purport of the tidings. Much time was wasted ere the valet could make him understand there

were strange men "up there"—pointing to the old castle—who had removed his carriage, dismissed his servants, and meant some harm to him: that was about all the terror-stricken Osterholzer could pick up, but he begged him to fly at once, offering to drive him in another carriage over the mountains to the Austrian Tyrol, where he would be safe.

Weber, who had not yet played falsely, joined his entreaties to the coachman's and volunteered to conduct Ludwig out of the castle without anyone's being a bit the wiser.

Ludwig chose to do the theatrical, declining these offers with scorn: "Fly! Why should I fly? I am in no danger; if I were, Hesselschwerdt would have told me," little suspecting that this very man was one of the prime movers in his ruin.

One reason, however, Ludwig may have had for his obstinacy. He was expecting an agent to arrange the completion of a loan he had fixed up independently of his Ministers and the officials of his Household. As a fact, this agent arrived at Hohenschwangau a few hours before the Commissioners from Munich, and had been trying to obtain an audience of the Sovereign, but had failed in consequence of the rapidity with which events at length moved. In the end the King was dead before the man knew his mission was futile.

What had most alarmed Osterholzer when Holnstein ordered him to unharness the horses and he had answered that the King had asked for his carriage,

were the Count's words, "The King no longer commands: His Royal Highness Prince Luitpold is master."

When these words were repeated to Ludwig he began at last to realise that something was really amiss and at once forbade all admittance to Neuschwanstein. Even then he could hardly believe that a serious attempt against his liberty was being planned. Others, however, were working for him, and thanks to them the first plot to abduct the King failed.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE ABDUCTION THAT FAILED

As we have related, the Commissioners arrived at Hohenschwangau about ten o'clock at night. Orders had been telegraphed in advance for a sumptuous supper, and Gerhacker, the head *chef*, himself volunteered to come to the castle to prepare it, leaving the care of the King's meal to one of his underlings at Neuschwanstein. As one of Count von Holnstein's principal spies, he was eager to do honour to the master he had served so assiduously. This supper, the menu of which fell by chance into the hands of a friend of Ludwig's, proves that the legend about the Commission's having been starved during its stay at Hohenschwangau was invented to satisfy public opinion that the Sovereign must have been mad whose household was in such a state of disorder that it could not discharge the ordinary duties of hospitality to the distinguished persons who had graciously consented to betray their King!

This menu—printed on a large card with gold borders, which shows that the meal had been carefully prepared beforehand—was as follows :

SOUPER DE SA MAJESTÉ LE ROI

Hohenschwangau, le 9 Juin, 1886

Consommé aux Noques
Truites à la Hollandaise
Poulet à la Marengo
Terrine de Foie Gras
Cuissot de Chevreuil rôti
Asperges
Crème à la Vanille aux Framboises

On the reverse side of this card, which I have seen, someone has drawn in pencil a rough sketch of the apartments in the castle of Linderhof, which were to be occupied by the King after he had been taken prisoner. According to the servants, ten bottles of champagne and an unlimited quantity of beer were consumed by the Commissioners, who probably wished to strengthen their nerves before starting for Neuschwanstein. As the meal was drawing to the end, the question was mooted who should acquaint the King that he was under arrest. As nobody seemed particularly anxious for the job, Holnstein avowed that he " didn't mind " and would go at once.

In the courtyard several of the royal servants had gathered, curious to watch events. A gentleman who was spending the summer at Hohenschwangau and who had met Ludwig several times during the King's daily walks and drives, indignant at what he was told, inquired of His Majesty's hairdresser whether no one would resist the rascally business and was abruptly informed that nothing could be done.

Among those who followed the Commissioners, when they proceeded on their mission, was the Baroness von Truchsess, who kept up a running comment of taunt and insult. She it was who, later, forced her way into the castle to warn Ludwig of impending danger.

" Are you not ashamed," she cried, " to betray your King? A glorious memory you will leave to your children ! " And more to a like effect.

Meanwhile the crowd grew larger and larger. Ludwig was immensely popular in this mountain district, whose natives had learned to know and love him during the long months he spent amongst them, and with one voice they denounced the infamous plot against his person. But the Commissioners were not to be moved. They had brought with them a special carriage so constructed that its inmate could not leave it until an elaborate set of locks and bars were undone from the outside, and which was furnished, in addition, with a plentiful supply of straps and ropes.

When the Commissioners reached Neuschwanstein, a surprise awaited them. The King, awakened for the moment out of his apathy, had summoned the local police and firemen to his help. A detachment of mounted gendarmes which Osterholzer had fetched at his master's command, stood before the gates leading into the inner courtyard and refused to allow the Commissioners to enter. Count von Holnstein then presented his credentials to the Commissary of Police, who replied that he did not need any credentials, for

only one person had any right to give orders there and that was the King, his master. Bravo, Sonntag!

Holnstein and his associates next tried to force an entrance by brushing Sonntag aside, but, drawing his revolver, the Commissary said that if he made another step forward he would shoot him.

Other policemen closed around, and a fight ensued between them and the keepers. During the tussle a keeper was seen to drop something, which afterwards was found to be a bottle of chloroform. Probably (so it was surmised) to stupefy the King if he proved obstreperous.

Checkmate—apparently! Ludwig, having now ascertained who were the men composing the Commission, ordered Sonntag to have them arrested for high treason. The Commissioners had employed the interval to review the fresh aspect of things. Denied admittance at Neuschwanstein, they had sent a telegram to Munich, to Prince Luitpold, briefly recording the facts and adding that the proclamation of Regency ought to be issued without delay. It had been held back in the insane hope—yet the Commissioners were not accused of madness!—that the King would sign the decree of his own insanity! They had, further, foreseen the likelihood of Ludwig's telegraphing to his personal friends for assistance, and in order to prevent this, had dismissed the telegraph officials at Hohenschwangau and replaced them by their own hirelings. This explains how had the King summoned help it could not have been forthcoming.

About nine o'clock next morning the Police Commissary informed the Commissioners that they were under arrest. To Holnstein's angry protest Sonntag answered: "Excellency, I have been unexpectedly placed in the most painful position I have ever occupied. I have received no instructions and cannot abandon my allegiance to the master whom I have served all these years, or appear as the enemy of my King. You must pardon me if I execute my orders."

Further resistance was abandoned, and as the Commissioners marched off in custody they were pursued with volleys of hisses and cries of execration. One woman lifted up her little girl to look at them, saying as she did so: "Mark them well, for when you are grown up you will be able to say you have looked for once upon despicable traitors!"

Count von Holnstein alone kept his countenance, and his wonted insolence did not desert him in this trying crisis. When he was brought into the castle his first words were to order breakfast. Ludwig, overhearing this, sarcastically observed, "Probably I shall be expected to offer wine to these gentlemen to drink my health."

But Ludwig, as we have seen, had the defects of his qualities. The mood of righteous wrath passed and at noon—in an access of inconceivable folly, which he probably disguised to himself as magnanimity—he ordered the prisoners to be released. 'Twas a fatal blunder; had he kept them at Neuschwanstein, he

might have detained them as hostages to assure better behaviour to himself, and, at the very least, have secured his own safety. When the Commission returned to Hohenschwangau, it remained there until the Regency had been publicly proclaimed.

Meanwhile the King had managed to convey a message to his aide-de-camp, Count Alfred von Dürckheim, on whose devotion to his person he knew he could rely. The latter arrived a few hours later at Neuschwanstein, and tried to persuade his Sovereign to go to Munich and openly show himself among his people, so that they might have an ocular and visible demonstration that he was all "right," and as sane as the rest of folk. The Baroness Truchsess, who had not left the castle, joined her entreaties to his, but Ludwig was obdurate and would not listen to these two faithful friends. Seemingly a fit of his too frequent apathy had overtaken him at the moment when alertness and vigilance were imperatively demanded. He agreed, however, to Count Dürckheim's telegraphing to Bismarck, asking for advice in this critical juncture.

It was impossible, as we have seen, to despatch this telegram from Hohenschwangau, and Dürckheim sent it by a trusted messenger to Tyrol; another message was forwarded to the Emperor of Austria; whilst a third person was sent to Possenhofen to acquaint the Empress Elizabeth with what was taking place and to urge her to come to the help of her favourite cousin.

Berlin speedily spoke: "His Majesty should go at

once to Munich and lay his interests before the assembled Houses of the Landtag."

Dürckheim endorsed Bismarck's advice and again urged the King to leave Neuschwanstein immediately. Ludwig would not move, though he consented to sign the following proclamation to the Bavarian people which his aide-de-camp had drawn up hurriedly :

" I, Ludwig II., King of Bavaria, am under the necessity of addressing this appeal to my faithful and beloved people, as well as to the whole German nation. My uncle, Prince Luitpold, designs, without my consent, to have himself proclaimed as Regent of my kingdom, and my former Ministry has, by means of false reports about the state of my health, deceived my beloved people and thus rendered itself guilty of High Treason. I enjoy perfect health, and my mind is as sound as that of any other Monarch, but the contemplated High Treason is so sudden and astounding that I have not had time to take the necessary measures to meet it, or to frustrate the criminal designs of my former Ministers.

" Should this conspiracy against my person succeed and Prince Luitpold assume, against my will, the government of this country, I beseech my faithful friends and subjects to try to uphold my rights by all means in their power. I adjure all State officials, and especially all honourable Bavarian officers and my brave Bavarian soldiers, to remember the oath they

have sworn to me and to remain faithful to it in this painful hour, when I have to contend with an unscrupulous usurper.

" I enjoin every Bavarian citizen, true to his King, to fight against Prince Luitpold and the Ministry until now in power, as against dangerous traitors. I have confidence in my people and feel sure they will not desert me in the hour of my need.

" I address myself to the whole German nation and to the allied German Princes to support me. As far as was in my power I have worked for the good of the German Empire, and I expect that it will not suffer a German Prince to become the victim of High Treason.

" Should I not be allowed an opportunity of appealing directly to His Majesty the German Emperor, then I commit the justice of my cause to public opinion. My brave and true Bavarians will surely not forsake me, and in case I am prevented by violence from upholding my rights, then let this appeal be a reason to my people to help me to defeat the plans of the traitors in arms against me.

" Given at Hohenschwangau, on the 9th of June, 1886.

" Ludwig II., King of Bavaria."

Count Dürckheim also sent a message to Baron Frankenstein, in the King's name, to form a new Ministry, and further telegraphed to the commander of a battalion of Tyrolese Chasseurs to come at once with

his men to the rescue of the Sovereign. This latter message, however, was entrusted to the valet Mayer, who kept it and delivered it to Count von Holnstein instead.

While these things were being done in the castle, Prince Luitpold and the Ministry in Munich had not been idle. The Regency had been proclaimed and, on the evening of the same day (June 10th), a detachment of mounted police arrived at Hohenschwangau and took the place of the men then stationed there. It was commanded by Colonel Hellingrath, and Major Steppes caused the inhabitants to be informed that several battalions of infantry would occupy the village and, at the least show of resistance, fire upon them.

Count Dürckheim was ordered to return immediately to Munich. His urgent entreaties to be allowed to remain with the King were disregarded, and when he sent in his resignation it was not accepted. Ludwig was also warned by a servant in whom he had confidence but who turned out the vilest of traitors, that if he kept the Count beside him the latter would be shot. Too generous to expose anyone to such a danger—least of all a friend—Ludwig himself dismissed the Count, who sorrowfully took leave of him. Before taking this step, however, be it said that Ludwig had wired to Prince Luitpold asking, as a personal favour, that Dürckheim might be permitted to bear him company. Came the answer, short and sharp: "Count Dürckheim must obey the orders of the War Office."

As the Count was leaving Neuschwanstein, he was met by Mayer, who anxiously inquired whether the King meant to go to Munich. With a mournful shake of the head the devoted Dürckheim could only answer, "I'm afraid not." Even his affection could not induce Ludwig to put up a bold fight for life and crown and liberty, otherwise than by words.

When Dürckheim reached Munich he was immediately arrested and kept in prison for a long time. Such was the Regent's fury that the Count was not allowed to go under escort and take a farewell leave of the dead King.

CHAPTER XXXVI

HEDGING IN THE KING

THERE are features in this tragedy—which, but for the kingly victim of it, might be truthfully described as sordid and ghastly—which baffle the research of the historian and the speculation of the theoriser, whether philosopher, lawyer, or poet. During the few hours between the arrest, brief as it was, of the Commissioners and the proclamation of the Regency at Munich, Ludwig might easily have escaped by one of the mountain passes which separate Neuschwanstein from Austrian Tyrol, to a place of comparative safety. I use the word "comparative" advisedly, because one can only conjecture what his enemies would have done had their captive slipped out of their hands. One thing is certain: they would have had to devise some other pretext than insanity before they could have accomplished his deposition.

In Austria or Italy, whither he could readily have gone, no doctor of repute would have pronounced him mad, without an exhaustive examination followed by a consultation with the most eminent specialists on mental disorders. From Italy, moreover, he could have reached the French frontier without difficulty and gained Paris,

where he would have been cordially, if not enthusiastically, welcomed, could have negotiated with his adversaries, and have settled his money affairs in a manner befitting his dignity and the facts of the case.

Why he avoided these opportunities remains a mystery which probably will never be cleared up. Some allege that the two valets, Mayer and Weber, drugged his food and thus reduced him to a condition in which he could not realise his perils and rendered him dazed when he should have had complete control of his presence of mind. Others contend that he was deliberately informed that the Regent had stationed considerable forces at Hohenschwangau with express orders to fire on the people should any effort be made to deliver the King, thus playing upon his well-known love of humane methods and horror of bloodshed. For it is certain that Ludwig had repeatedly said he did not wish his people to run any danger on his account.

On the other hand, he might have been assured that there was no risk whatever in guiding him through hill tracks and passes known only to the natives (and not to all of these) to the road to Innsbrück, where no one would molest him.

As we shall see presently, the Baroness Truchsess tried her hardest to warn him of his doom, while two ladies, equally devoted to his cause, made their way to Neuschwanstein solely to implore him to fly ere it was too late. However, he persistently refused to seek

the hospitality of a secure retreat, and it was only during the last hours before his imprisonment that he awoke to a sense of the serious danger that was threatening him, a circumstance which lends some support to the theory that he had been under the influence of a drug that numbed his faculties and deprived him of his power of initiative. For long hours he had seemed utterly indifferent to his fate, but this apathy vanished and he asserted his kingly dignity when a keeper laid sacrilegious hand upon him and attempted to drag him to a carriage in readiness to convey him to the prison whence he would never have emerged alive.

Ludwig's last hours in his beloved castle of Neuschwanstein must have been truly terrible. He was quite alone save for a few servants, who, with the shining exception of coachman Osterholzer, would not have raised a finger to help him and who, on the contrary, had been for months working against him, betraying him, and trying to furnish his persecutors with the evidence they needed to bolster up their case that he was hopelessly and incurably insane. He could not bring himself to believe that these men, whom he had always treated so kindly, would join his enemies, and—after Count von Dürckheim's departure—having no companion with whom he could conduct conversation, he allowed the expression of his indignation to escape him in their hearing. Of course these menials, instead of being touched by his unprecedented misfortune, only laughed at it and repeated afterwards what he had

told them, delighted to read, in the agonised utterances of an overwhelming despair, the confirmation of the madness which they had been ordered to impute or invent.

Hour after hour Ludwig walked up and down the immense halls of Neuschwanstein, followed by one of the two valets whose business it was not to let him out of their sight. Once he turned to Mayer and asked whether he believed in the immortality of the soul. On his answering that he did, the King exclaimed :

" I also believe in it. I believe in the immortality of the soul and in the justice of God. I have read much about Materialism and its doctrines, and they have not satisfied me. It puts men on the level of animals, and this is not consistent with human dignity."

Presently he remarked with intense emotion :

" I am going to be precipitated from the highest pinnacle a man can occupy in the world to the lowest depths. I shall not bear it; life would be worthless afterwards."

And again :

" I could endure their taking my crown away, but I shall never survive being declared insane. I could not suffer to be reduced to the condition of my brother Otto, whom any keeper can order about and threaten with his fists, when he does not choose to listen."

Thoughts of suicide haunted him, and more than once he alluded to an intention to take his life.

" My mother will be unhappy at it and I would

have wished to spare her this sorrow. But I shall be driven to it and my blood shall be on my betrayers."

Ludwig was full of anger and bitterness at his uncle, Prince Luitpold. "He is a good relative, indeed," he exclaimed; "he seizes my crown and then takes me prisoner. He ought not to be called the Prince Regent, but the Rebel Prince."

Whilst the unfortunate Monarch was draining the bitter cup of his tragic fate to the dregs, the villagers of Hohenschwangau were planning how they could free him. Throughout Bavaria and Tyrol the news had spread that some evil was intended against their beloved Sovereign, and peasants were coming down in numbers from the mountains, armed with the first weapons they could lay hands on, and assuming a most menacing attitude in regard to the Commissioners, who, as we have seen, had now returned to Hohenschwangau and there awaited the proclamation of the Regency and the arrival of the troops summoned to aid them in their abominable mission. Had the King only given the signal, the whole country would have risen to his rescue as one man.

Of this the Government was painfully aware, and Prince Luitpold and von Lutz were not without anxiety as to the turn events might take. Strict orders were issued to kidnap the King at any price, and when the officer in command of the troops at Hohenschwangau went to the War Office for final instructions, he was told that he was to use force, if necessary, to prevent

Ludwig from being rescued by the Tyrol peasants who had collected around the castle, and were guarding the mountain passes, whilst awaiting their Sovereign who, they had been told, was about to join them. For it seems that Count von Holnstein had succeeded in corrupting some of them, who persuaded the simple people to wait for the King, instead of rushing to Neuschwanstein, as they had proposed doing at first.

Had they executed this intention, it is likely that the sight of so many loyal friends around him would have given Ludwig sufficient energy to avail himself of their help. It is certain that what weighed most upon him in those last hours of liberty was the solitude in which he was suddenly plunged. He had loved it in the past, but now it oppressed him; it seemed to indicate that he had been abandoned by the whole world; which was doubtless literally true, if by that word we mean the people to whom he had always shown himself kind, helpful, and generous; and such ingratitude could not fail to stab him to the heart. He knew nothing of the many plans that were being concocted for his deliverance, and imagined himself forsaken not by his attendants only, but also by his subjects. This was a soul-racking thought to a King who had fancied his people loved him well enough to stand by him, no matter in what circumstances, nor under what conditions.

As for the Government, it took every precaution to prevent news from the outside world from reaching

him and also hastened the proclamation of the Regency. It understood that unless matters were hurried, it might find itself in serious difficulties, as the people were murmuring that it wanted to kill the King and sell Bavaria to Prussia. At any rate this rumour freely circulated both in Hohenschwangau and Munich, where the inhabitants did not relish the advent of Prince Luitpold to power.

Nor was the War Office at all reassured about the conduct of the troops, who might refuse to accept the new order of things and take no orders from anyone but their King. All at once he had become a hero, the champion of the people's rights against Prussian usurpation of his prerogatives and dignity. There was even a whisper of most sinister moment that Bismarck meant to place a Hohenzollern on the throne of Bavaria. Of course, there was no truth in this report, but the fact that it was deemed credible proves the terrible tension of the public mind at the time, and the facility with which Ludwig, had he had the will and the pluck, might have resisted the schemes of his relatives to confine him in an asylum, or its equivalent.

Accordingly, it was decided to wait no longer but to proceed at once against the King and carry him beyond reach of those who were working for his deliverance. After serious consideration it was resolved not to trust to the regular troops at Hohenschwangau, but to send there mounted policemen, principally recruited among the few Prussian soldiers in the Bavarian service,

who would not feel the scruples which Ludwig's own subjects might feel. Count von Holnstein, having the help of these policemen, was told by Prince Luitpold that they would be sent forward at once and that he was to act immediately they reached Hohenschwangau, and transport the King to the place appointed for his residence.

Ludwig's doom was sealed, this time for ever.

CHAPTER XXXVII

"AFTER LIFE'S FITFUL FEVER"

WHEN the King saw the mounted policemen he concluded they had come to protect him, but was speedily undeceived. He was about to set out on his usual drive, when he was informed that it could not be sanctioned. Realising then that he was a prisoner and they his gaolers, he bade his hairdresser fetch him some poison, which the man declined to do.

On the morning of the 11th of June the new Government was proclaimed, and the villagers of Hohenschwangau were told that any attempt to defend the King would be dealt with as overt treason. But the notice was treated with disdain, and the inhabitants of the whole district, along with some Tyrol peasants, determined to try to rescue their Sovereign. Their plan was to convey him out of the castle and, relying on the stranger-policemen's ignorance of the mountain paths, take him through the woods to the Kitzbergfad, a pass leading into Austrian Tyrol, where he would be safe. Devoted hearts did not fail these rude mountaineers, and it is incomprehensible that Ludwig declined the only means of salvation still at his disposal.

In spite of the difficulties of communicating with

him, two ladies, disguised as peasant women on a visit to Frau Mayer, the valet's wife, made their way into the castle, thanks to the connivance of some servants, who assured the officer in charge of the gates that they knew them well. But Mayer himself, who wore the dress of a valet and had the soul of one, proved the obstacle, refusing to take them to the King. Later, Osterholzer, ever faithful, contrived to acquaint Ludwig with the arrangements for his escape, but when he could not guarantee that no blood would be shed in carrying them out, the King would not accept the homage and devotion of these, almost the last friends left him on earth, and thus sealed his own fate. Afterwards he seemed to change his mind and asked for Osterholzer, but by now the heroic coachman had become suspect and been removed by force from the castle.

Nothing could avert his doom, and Ludwig appeared to feel this himself, because he spent these hours in deep meditation, occasionally avowing that he would kill himself, to avoid a still more dishonouring issue. From time to time he went out on the balcony and gazed at the lovely landscape, as if taking a last fond look of scenery he knew so well. He grew more resigned by-and-by, but, contrary to his custom, for he was as a rule a most sober man, drank copiously of brandy and wine, probably to benumb his consciousness of what the immediate future had in store.

By this time the Prussian faction changed its mind as to his future abode. Dr. Gudden, fearing that

Linderhof might not be safe enough, had the castle of Berg hastily prepared for the deposed Sovereign. At 1 a.m. of the 12th of June the Commissioners, accompanied by a strong escort of troops, started for Neuschwanstein, during a torrential downpour. The King was alone, his servants and attendants, with the exception of Mayer and Weber, on whom the conspirators knew they could rely, having been dismissed. Despite his people's prayers that the King might be housed in Neuschwanstein, where his custody might have been as completely safeguarded as at Berg, and where he would have been in a friendly environment, Gudden would not hear of it and the King must, perforce, be removed to Berg. It was generally believed that the doctor had consulted his own convenience, because Berg's proximity to Munich enabled him to go there every day, to attend to his asylum in the city.

As he must be a prisoner at any moment, as soon as he heard the sound of horses' hoofs in the courtyard, Ludwig called Mayer and presented him with the diamond brooch he had been wont to wear in his hat. I hope the valet liked his keepsake and its memories of his behaviour to his Master. Then the King returned to the dining-room and sat down to his last meal. It was said afterwards that his extraordinary composure was due to a hint that Osterholzer (before his own ill-treatment) had given him that the Empress Elizabeth had taken steps to have him rescued at Berg. Then he suddenly asked for the key of the

great tower, but Mayer told him it had been lost. As Ludwig repeated his command, the valet, alarmed lest he might throw himself from the summit, hurried downstairs, and inquired of the Commissioners what he was to do. The doctor ordered him to return to the King and say the key had been found.

Apparently thinking he had better secure it at once, Ludwig went for the key. This was exactly what the Commissioners, prepared to use force if need be, had hoped for. But as soon as the room door was opened and the King—quiet, calm, majestic—appeared on the threshold, the idea of violence vanished into thin air. The conspirators were taken aback by his dignified mien. At length Dr. von Gudden stepped forward and, *sans cérémonie*, arrested his Royal Master " in the name of the Prince Regent ! "

" How is it you have presumed to pronounce me mad," inquired Ludwig, " when you have neither seen nor spoken to me ? "

Gudden evasively answered that all arrangements had been made to ensure his safety and it was hoped his Majesty would soon be well again, if he would only allow them to take care of him.

In the meanwhile the keepers approached the King, offering to take him by the arm, but he signalled them to stand aside with a repressing wave of the hands.

" There is no need for this," he said. " I will go with you."

At 3 a.m. Neuschwanstein was left, the King being

quite composed. As the carriage was on the point of starting, he summoned his valet to the window. Mayer advanced and had received a few instructions when Gudden, grown impatient, promptly put a period to the interview by bidding the coachman drive on—" as fast as you can ! "

Never had the eternal hills witnessed such a scene. On the box of the coach in which Ludwig rode with the doctor sat a keeper; an outrider, on horseback, followed; groups of policemen were stationed at intervals along the road. Silent and in despair, the peasants —helpless but profoundly sympathetic—gazed in horror at this kidnapping of the King they had loved. They knew of his eccentricities, but they knew, too, of the man behind them. Women wept and men hurled curses, not loud but deep, at the new Prince Regent and at Gudden, one of the ringleaders, if not an instigator of the plot that cost Ludwig his liberty and, as it happened, in the mysterious working of God's providence, both their lives.

Altogether, it is hard to explain Gudden's part in this tragedy save on the supposition of a deliberate intention to goad his patient to desperation. For, however " queer " he was at times, Ludwig had never been seized with a fit of insanity. His nerves were, unquestionably, in a bad condition, but this might have been easily remedied had he not been handled like a wild beast. When a fellow's wits are a bit unhinged, you don't fetch a strait-waistcoat and incarcerate him.

You treat him as a neurotic and tune him up to concert pitch. Nor could Ludwig help viewing the gross affront now offered him without the liveliest indignation. He held the highest idea of the kingly status and function and loathed the licence which it had pleased his captors to use toward him. Moreover, he could not stand Gudden at any price. He had detested him ever since he had seen him by his brother Prince Otto's bedside, and the notion that now this man of all men should be *his* keeper he resented as a personal insult.

Berg had always been one of his favourite residences and it was a refinement of cruelty to convey him to it as a State prisoner. His old apartments had not been prepared for him, but two small rooms were allotted for his use. The windows were fitted with iron bars, and holes were pierced in the door, so as to allow of constant surveillance. Imagine the sentiments of such a creature of impulse! But whatever he thought he said little. Indeed, he was as yet buoyed up by hopes of escaping his hard lot. He would not risk his adherent's lives at Neuschwanstein, but at Berg he was within measurable distance of his cousin, the Empress Elizabeth of Austria, and she would come to his help. Might he but repeat an exploit of his youth and swim across Lake Starnberg, where she would await him on the other side! His knowledge of the country should enable him to defy pursuit. This theory, doubtless well founded, explains why he was so docile in Dr.

Gudden's presence. The latter was entirely deluded by this apparent acquiescence and apathy, and telegraphed to Munich that everything was going on as well as possible.

Next day, Whit-Sunday (June 13th), Ludwig wished to go to church, but Gudden objected, lest his healthy appearance might give the lie to those who pronounced him mad. Ludwig said nothing but asked for an orange, which was brought to him on a plate, without a knife to peel it. When he requested his servants to bring him one, they refused to do so on the ground that the doctor had forbidden it. The King sent away the orange, but still said nothing. It seemed as if he were bent upon not getting angry or impatient, whilst his keepers appeared to have orders to try to goad him to some rash or violent deed.

At four o'clock he partook of dinner with relish, inquiring, however, whether Dr. Gudden had touched his food before it was brought to him. He seemed to suspect that the Doctor might put something in it that would stupefy him, and then show him to the people in that obfuscated state. After dinner Ludwig asked to see Zanders, his courier, whom he knew to be in the castle. At first Gudden would not hear of it, but at last consented to let Zanders come to the King's room, having put him on his word of honour not to hold out any hope of escape. The courier promised, under the impression that there would be other visits, and that Gudden would not exact a pledge every time.

Zanders found Ludwig in excellent temper, full of energy, and quite a different man from what he was at Neuschwanstein, when he had neither the resource nor the pluck to fly from his relentless enemies. He contemptuously showed the courier the iron bars to his windows and the holes in the doors, and related his experiences of the last twenty-four hours, during which he had been treated as if he were the inmate of a menagerie.

"Will they keep me here like this for the rest of my life?" he asked.

"Your Majesty will soon be well again and be able to resume your customary duties."

"Do you believe so?" retorted Ludwig drily. "Remember the proverb, 'L'appétit vient en mangeant'! My Uncle Luitpold will get used to his new position, and find it so pleasant that he will never let me out of this place."

Presently and more abruptly he asked:

"How many policemen are there in this park watching over me?"

"Seven or eight, Your Majesty."

"They'd shoot me, I suppose, if I bolted?"

"But your Majesty does not think of such a thing!" exclaimed Zanders.

"Are their guns loaded?"

"They are not loaded at all, Your Majesty," quoth the courier.

Ludwig then spoke of indifferent matters and

dismissed Zanders, who was greatly troubled, because he was sincerely attached to his master. Zanders returned to his own room—tired out—he had been up for the last three days and nights—and threw himself on his bed, dressed as he was, to snatch a little rest. Suddenly he was awakened by screams and shouts, and certain officials entered his room and told him that the King and Gudden had not returned from a stroll in the Park.

At first Zanders thought that possibly some of Ludwig's friends had seized Gudden and helped the King to reach a boat which had borne him across the lake, where he knew that the Empress Elizabeth had been waiting the whole of the day! With this idea in his mind, he tried to persuade the servants not to search for the Monarch, saying he felt sure nothing had happened, since he was with Gudden.

But one of the keepers whose duty it was to follow the footsteps of the doctor and his patient, and who had only refrained from doing so on the former's orders, started a search on his own account, and found the bodies of Ludwig and Gudden in the lake—stiff and cold and dead. . . .

. . . . . .

What really happened no one knows. Had the King tried to escape, or had he put an end to himself, or had both perished in a mutual struggle, the one to fly, the other to prevent flight, remains a mystery. As has been told, the Empress Elizabeth was awaiting

him on the other side of the lake, ready to carry out her share in the plan for his deliverance, a plan to which he was privy and which very nearly succeeded, but the actual and tragic failure of which plunged her into deep grief for the rest of her life.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

A STRANGE EVENTFUL HISTORY

WHILST this terrible tragedy, which opened at Neuschwanstein and closed in the blue waters of Lake Starnberg, was in progress, how were Prince Luitpold and his accomplices occupied in Munich? The callous old man had (as we know) been proclaimed Regent, against the wishes of the country over which he was destined to rule for more than twenty-six years, and which he was to transform into an appanage or province of Prussia. Neither he, nor Count Holnstein, nor the Bavarian Ministry, felt the slightest remorse for the crime they had severally and jointly aided and abetted. One excuse they had for their conduct—in their own eyes at least, for no one but themselves ever admitted it—namely, irresistible reasons of State.

After his discovery of Prussian duplicity, Ludwig II. would have been a standing menace to the political system of which Prussia was the head and front. Depending as it did on its alliance with the South German States, Bismarck intuitively knew that the bond must snap if Ludwig ever took an active and independent interest in politics. Moreover, he was bound to try to recover his own control of the Government of Bavaria

as soon as his time-serving Ministers forfeited his confidence. Ludwig's success involved the restoration of her old standing army, so that the contemplated neutrality treaty with France must enhance the importance of Bavaria in the event of a fresh war and jeopardise Bismarck's lifework which, according to the sycophants of his reptile Press, had been done for all time.

Curiously enough, Ludwig was the only Bavarian Royalty who recognised the advantage of separation from Prussia. The Royal Family had been wholly converted to Imperialist ideas, while Bismarck had bought the Cabinet—which only cared for one thing, its own maintenance in permanent power—lock, stock, and barrel. A fig for Bavaria's independence! What was it to them, or they to it? Besides, on the smallest symptom of a movement in that direction, the Prussian Army would swoop down on it, obliterate its institutions, wipe out its dynasty (which might be no irretrievable disaster), and enslave its people. No! No high politics for them! Prince Luitpold—good, easy man!—was perfectly content with a titular dignity and a fat income. His children, too, should enjoy like comfortable privileges without any of the responsibilities of power. Besides, the Regent had never liked his nephew, and felt humiliated that the younger man was Head of his House, a position to which, he thought, no one knows exactly why, he had a better right. But if he were the minister of jealousy he was a master of hypocrisy, and there were those who believed that he

sincerely lamented the Sovereign whom he had ruthlessly deprived of crown and kingdom—might it not be said of life also?—as they beheld him bending over Ludwig's bier, shedding tears a crocodile might have envied.

For the honours denied to poor Ludwig towards the end of his luckless life, were rendered in profusion to his mortal remains. His body was brought to Munich on Whit-Monday evening and exposed in the chapel adjoining the royal residence so that everybody might pay to it the due homage of respect. The King was dressed in the costume of a Knight of St. George, with his orders and decorations, and a sword in his right hand. On his breast lay the flowers deposited by a melancholy woman, in black and deeply veiled, the Empress Elizabeth of Austria, who had come over from Possenhofen to gaze for the last time on the features of the beloved cousin who had been her only real friend on earth.

When the Bavarian Chambers resumed their sittings stormy scenes were enacted. The Government was bitterly reproached by different party leaders for its conduct in the tragedy. The right of the Regent and his Ministers to depose the King was keenly contested, and it was urged that, before resorting to such an extremity, the country ought to have been consulted and the Chambers assembled. Of course, this would not have answered the purpose of the Prussian gang, for well they knew that the Chambers would have

smashed the shameless conspiracy by demanding other certificates than those of doctors who had never seen the King before declaring him mad and placing him under restraint. Ludwig was beloved by everybody, and those who deplored the singularities of his character and the eccentricity of his mode of life would never have lent themselves to a plot against him. Hence loud and long were the threats uttered against the men who had hounded him to death.

Had the King survived, it is probable that, in the teeth of the Government, the Chambers would have insisted upon themselves appointing another Commission to examine Ludwig and report. What would have happened then it is, of course, impossible and idle to conjecture. Dr. von Gudden's diagnosis would, in all likelihood, have been rejected by other medical men less interested than he was in the presumed dementia of his lawful King. Even had a decree of insanity gone forth from the fresh Commission, the Regency would have been constituted on other lines than those prescribed by Prince Luitpold, Baron von Lutz, and their followers. No doubt a Regency Council instead of a Regent would have been instituted—a Council on which the leaders of the different parties in the Chambers would have found a place. Ludwig dead, no one had sufficient interest to curtail Prince Luitpold's power and prerogatives. The new Sovereign, Prince Otto, was a confirmed lunatic, without hope of ever recovering his reason. His uncle was the uncontested

heir to his throne. Whether he ascended it as King or as Regent seemed to most folk a matter of supreme indifference. There he was—the man in possession.

The drama was played out and Prussia was absolute master of the field. With a Government entirely won over to its interests, it could count on Bavaria's neutrality, and even on her co-operation in future schemes of conquest. Prussian organisation having been introduced into Bavaria, Prussian ideas and opinions began to win ground in the peaceful country whose public and patriotic spirit had been crushed, and the Wittelsbachs became the humble servants of the Hohenzollerns.

Now the events we have been describing seem strangely remote and almost wanting in interest, in presence of the awful catastrophe into which Prussian arrogance and ambition have deliberately plunged the world. The generation that knew and loved Ludwig has nearly passed away, but his name has become legendary in his native mountains and is one to conjure with among the pious, simple-minded country folk who love not the seamy side of public life or the demoralised men who share it. Some still hold as not-proven the allegation of his insanity, which, after all, called for more unequivocal evidence than that of the documents laid before the Bavarian Chambers. As a deputy remarked after perusing them, "These are not proofs, but only the reports of servants who betrayed their master, and of doctors who never saw the man they consigned to a living death."

Ludwig was sacrificed to the ambition of an unprincipled old man; to the lust of power of unscrupulous Ministers; to the revenge of toadies, spongers, hangers-on and blackmailers whose greed he had failed to satisfy; to passions kindled in his own breast by interested creatures, under orders, perhaps, to compass his ruin, if thereby Prussia might live. Had he been content with the lot of an ornamental figure-head, Bismarck would not have cared a rap for him but have let him have his fill of pomp and circumstance. Because he dared to call his soul his own and presumed to love his country and his people and to place them first in his regard and watchfulness he became anathema to Prussia.

Throughout his life Ludwig II. contended against the canker of Prussianism. That he did not maintain the struggle resolutely and efficiently was his misfortune, not his fault. For if he did not strive continuously he worked continually to save his country. Had his education equipped him for the momentous responsibilities he had to carry, he might have stemmed Prussian encroachments. But his romantic temperament bore him at times into the empyrean; he lacked moral backbone; had no great care for politics; durst not dethrone God and install Moloch and fall down and worship that foul and hideous idol; loathed Kultur while honouring culture. His ideals were of a wholly different order. He loved the sun, Nature, flowers, pictures and all other fine manifestations of art; was generous and kind; could not bear the sight of suffering;

quailed before sorrow and tears, and longed to see everyone happy. He was truly "le Roi Chevalier" and, as such, Prussia had no need for him. Those who think he died before his time are mistaken. Those who truly loved him rejoiced that he was spared the destruction of his faith and the eclipse of his lofty and inspiring ideals.

And so we hark back to the old soothsayer's quaint prediction: "Quand le Vendredi Saint sur le jour de Saint George, Pâques sur le jour de Saint Marc, et la Fête Dieu sur le jour de Saint Jean, tout le Monde pleurera." In these pages we have read of its fulfilment, and to-day it is literally true that not only Bavaria, but the whole world weeps.

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